

FIELD SPORTS OF
THE MONTH.

PRICE ONE SHILLING NETT.

FIELD SPORTS OF THE MONTH

FOR POOR SPORTSMEN

BY

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PRICE ONE SHILLING NETT,

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PREFACE.

This series of articles is written for the sportsman who is "poor" from the point of view of wordly goods. Such a man can enjoy the various sports described, if he does not go for the size and value of the "bag," and will agree with Izaak Walton that "all of fishing is not fish." The author does not claim that the descriptions are exhaustive in any way, or are of any value to the men who know how to do it, but he hopes they may be useful to the few who do not know.

The prose is so weak that the printers, good fellows have schemed to support it between two poems. The intention was well meant and is taken in the right spirit.

T.W.E. M.

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THE OLD DOG-FOX.

THE CHESHIRE HOUNDS.

Now list to me, ye Cheshire men, who all are
sportsmen keen.

I'll sing you a song of a famous pack, the
Cheshire hounds, I mean.

First Thursday in November at Duddon Heath
they're down to meet.

If we find a straight-necked fox at home,
we're bound to have a treat.

Chorus. Then Tallyho forrard away,
It's a beautiful hunting day,
With a straight-necked fox to
the Peckforton Rocks
We'll have a grand gallop to-day.

Dan Gidman knows of a good dog fox in the
Watless Covert near.

If he hasn't been to the Tarporley Ball, he's
been up all night, I fear

He dined at old John Lightfoot's and break-
fasted at Lea's.

But the Master's come and they're moving off,
"Hounds, gentlemen, if you please."

Chorus. Then Tallyho forrard away,
It's a beautiful hunting day,
Let's find the old fox and to
Peckforton Rocks,
We'll have a grand gallop to-day.

Tallyho! Tallyho! see yonder he goes, with a
hound close on to his brush.

You'd best take the fence to the right of the
gate, if you want to be clear of the rush.
Hold hard! there are only three couple of
hounds out of covert. That man on the
fleabitten grey

Is a confounded fool: All right, sir, don't
holloa! We all know the fox is away.

Chorus. Then Tallyho forrard away,
It's a beautiful hunting day,
He's a banging big fox and to
Peckforton Rocks
We're in for a gallop to-day.

By Jove it's a cracker, they're going as fast as
your horse can lay legs to the ground.
Hold up! you old brute, 'twas a nasty-ish place
and I thought we were sure to be downed.
There's the brook with a stiff bit of timber in
front, but a take-off as sound as a board.
There are six coming down at it, hard as they
can, but I'll bet there'll be some of 'em
floored.

Chorus. Then Tallyho forrard away,
It's a beautiful hunting day,
A brimmer, a bumper, your best
water-jumper
Will find his work cut out to-day.

Steady, mare, now, we're not in a cavalry
charge. Just a canter, then quicken your
stride

As you come to it; now for the honour of
Cheshire! Thank goodness we're on the
right side.

There are three of them in it, and three have
refused, and the others are looking about
for a ford—well, there is one a mile up the
stream. That they're pounded there isn't
a doubt.

Chorus. Then Tallyho forrard away,
It's a beautiful hunting day,
On my good mare's back I'm
alone with the pack!
And I'm in for a gallop to-day.

It can't last much longer, their hackles are up
and they're running for blood, that's
clear.

By Jove! but they're running in view; there
he goes! but the main earths are deucedly
near!

Who-hoop! 'twas too hot for him all the way
through, they've roasted him over an hour.
He's as stiff as a board, but a grander old fox
ne'er to hounds had his colours to lower.

Chorus. Then Tallyho forrard away,
It's a beautiful hunting day,
Whoop, tear him and eat him,
You fairly have beat him.
We've had a grand gallop to-day.



FIELD SPORTS OF THE MONTH.

JANUARY.

PIKE FISHING.—LIVE BAITING.

"First a Jack, then a Pickerel, thirdly a Pike, and last of all a Luce." Halliwell is our authority for this nomenclature, but the exact age at which these names are given is doubtful, and as a rule only Jack and Pike are referred to by modern fishermen, the former name being bestowed on small fish up to three or four pounds. The name Jack is probably a term of familiarity and analogous to Jackdaw and Jacksharp. Pickerel is the diminutive of Pike, which is derived from the French "Pique," meaning pointed, alluding to the general shape of the fish rather than to its head, which is not pointed, but flattened like a duck's beak.

The name Luce is probably taken from the Greek word "Lukos," which means a Wolf. Esox has not a good character from his last place, one gentleman writing about him as "fell tyrant of the liquid plain," and another as "the scourge and terror of the scaly brood!"

I will not give Günther's description of the Pike at length, but will just refer to the fact that "the body is covered with small cycloid

scales, many with a muciferous channel." I will attempt a description for myself, which may be more intelligible, if not so scientific. Have a look at this 14lb. male pike—length 33 inches, girth 14 inches. The size of head to the whole length is 1 : 4. The body is of uniform depth, or nearly so, from shoulder to dorsal fin, there narrowing to tail. The head is awful; no other adjective fits so well. Open his jaws, flattened, as I said before, like a duck's beak, the under one slightly longer, and look in—a pint pot would go in easily. Look at the teeth, as Houghton says, "in a single series—unequal in size." Sharp? yes, very. Never try to release hooks from his mouth without a disgorging and gag. It is like getting your fingers in a rat trap, if he fastens on you. Mark his "plumage," dark olive green on back, becoming lighter towards the sides, which are "fingered," like those of a mackerel and dappled with yellow spots. White is his belly, that sepulchre full of his victims' bones. As to the rest of his external anatomy, look at his mighty tail, which is adorned with a brilliant scarlet line on its edge, and as you are investigating his fins, observe that the dorsal fin is directly above the anal.

The best months for pike fishing are October to February, and for some reasons January is the best. The fish are in prime condition, as they do not usually spawn till March or April. The weeds are down, and the N.E. wind, as Kingsley says, "hungers into madness every plunging pike."

Let me suppose you have got leave for a day on a "pikey" water. If you are to have a boat, so much the better, but in this case mind you put on your warmest clothes. All

wool underwear, with a "sweater" over your shirt, a Norfolk jacket with stormproof cuffs, a mackintosh, a strong pair of boots and leggings, a deer-stalker cap with ear-flaps. Going to the North Pole? No, but you can come in your pyjamas if you like. Lunch, of course—whisky? Well, we won't argue, but I think cold tea beats it all to nothing. Bring your flask, though; I prefer Scotch.

Now about tackle. There are only two ways of taking pike which I shall describe particularly, as I think they are the most interesting, viz., live baiting and spinning. The same rod will do for both—a whole cane, with green-heart top, fairly whippy. The rings must be big snake-rings right up to the top, which is best furnished with a "Bickerdyke" ring. An indiarubber button on the end of the butt is a comfort. A Nottingham reel, with adjustable check, or a Mallock (of which I have no practical experience), with 80 yards or so of silk line.

Now let us suppose you are going to live-bait first, and then, when you want to get your circulation a little brisker, to spin. Your livebait are dace or gudgeon, which you had better buy. Don't rely on the rustic who promises to bring you two dozen fine dace on the morning of your expedition, or on the keeper's casting net when you arrive.

Put your rod up, and after fixing the reel, with the handle to your right hand, thread the line through the rings.

Now push off your boat and moor it at the edge of the weeds, if possible with your back to the weeds and wind. It will be warmer, and your bait will keep away from the boat. When I say "moor your boat," it is not so simple as it sounds, if there are no stakes.

The oars will do at a pinch, if the bottom is soft and the depth of water not too great, or a heavy stone made fast to a rope will serve. I recollect filling a bait can with gravel and letting it down as an anchor. The string broke as we were hauling it up, but we spliced a gaff on to an oar, and luckily hit the handle of the can at the first try.

As soon as you are in position, which should be arrived at with as little splashing and noise as possible, tie a lead on to your line and plumb the depth: we will suppose you have six feet of water in front of you. Now attach to your running line three feet of the finest gimp you can lay hands on, or, better still, of strong gut, at the free end of which is the "snap-tackle." This consists merely of a triangle with a single hook whipped on to the cast, about an inch above the triple hooks. Attach a "Jardine" lead—verily, the best ever invented—about 18 inches above the hooks and a foot above where line and trace join fasten a Jardine plugless float. The beauty of the Jardine leads and floats is that you can attach them without either disconnecting the trace and line or injuring either. Two or three small corks above the float will prevent the bait from swimming over the sunk line and getting entangled in it. Now take a live bait and put the single hook of the snap-tackle through the fleshy part of the back, taking care not to injure the spine, and then either fasten one hook of the triangle into the shoulder or leave it "flying."

Pull two yards of slack off the reel, and let the bait swing once or twice like a pendulum, and then with a gentle "heft" let go, and you will have the satisfaction of catching the hooks in the gunwale of the boat or of seeing

the bait fall into the water some yards off the boat in front of you. In the latter case all will go merry as a marriage bell—otherwise there will be a funeral, as you will have stunned your bait and have to fish another out of the can. Never use a sickly bait, if you can help it—a drop or two of alcohol is a “corpse reviver” for such.

You must not think you have got a bite if the float goes under at once—a lively bait will do this at first. Now light your pipe—it is out long ago—and look after your remaining baits. Put them in the well of the punt, if there is one, or hang the can in the water. This will prevent bother with the livebait sanitary inspector and arguments about cubic feet. Look out now—that's *Esox*. Down goes the float with a plunge—then up again—then down and sailing away under water. Up comes the float again. Now when it goes under again and away, strike. Now's the time—give it him. Strike once or twice and hold on; don't touch the line, let him go, it's open water. There, that's rush number one. Now reel in. He's coming at you, and this is critical, as he means to make for the weeds under the boat. Hold him hard and turn him back when you get him under the rod point. That's right, he's away again, but the next time he comes this way I'll be ready with the net. Reel in now, and still hold him tight, as he may not be extra well hooked. That will do. Steady. Here he is—a nice fish. About twenty pounds? No. I think he'll pull about six, but he may weigh twenty by this time next year.

We'll drink “Health to men and death to fishes.” Thanks, that's better than cold tea.

FEBRUARY.

PIKE FISHING

TROLLING AND SPINNING.

It looks as if you had caught the "king of the castle." No other pike seems to have ventured on to the late owner's domain. I fancy they have certain beats, like trout.

Eleven o'clock, is it? What about trolling for an hour or two? You can try from the boat and I will row you. Spinning from the boat is "off," as I shall have to take my chance of your hooking me in the ear, and I don't think even the "Daily Mail" policy will cover that risk. You can practise after lunch in the park meadow. Take the live-bait tackle off; set the bait free in the water. He will do all right. You will find a "Wobbler" flight in my box. A spoon bait is too crude, though sometimes very deadly.

By the way, that box was one used in "the tanks." It is most convenient, as it is not too deep, and you can find things in it. It is made of khaki-coloured tin—18 by 4 by 9 inches. It has two compartments and a loose lid.

I have brought a score of nice, hand-picked sprats from the fishmonger, and have had them in pickle for a fortnight. An old pickle bottle, wide-mouthed and squat, with a patent spring cork, can be found in most housekeepers' cupboards.

The sprats are as bright as the day they were caught, and ought to be tough. Pick the biggest, and push the blade of the tackle into the mouth.

You will find there is a knack in opening a sprat's mouth, which is something like a motor hood, all angles and rods, covered with a fairly tough membrane, but go carefully about it and push the blade up to the hilt through the body of the fish and parallel with the spine. Now curve the body, and fix the lowest triangle into the fleshy part of the tail. Push the straight hook of the upper triangle into the shoulder of the bait, and, to make it last longer, wrap a thin piece of wire round the bait, enclosing the shoulder triangle. Fasten that twisted steel wire "Punjab" trace (which is no thicker than salmon gut) to the swivel at the head of the bait, by means of the link-spring, and tie the line on to the swivel at the other end of the trace. There are two extra swivels on the trace, so something is bound to go round. Now, are you ready? No. You have got no lead on. Put that Jardine lead about two feet from the bait. Up-anchor, and, when I get the boat into deeper water, drop the bait astern, take a pull to see it wobbles, and pay out slowly from the reel with the check on. That's right.

Well! Did you ever? A small jack struck at the bait while it was in sight. Keep the line as it is, and he will probably come again. Yes! there he is, and though he is not a big one, you will have to get him into the boat to release the hooks and put him back, as if you love him. What is the good of killing small fish in pike water? You might as well take six-inch trout from the Test. Keep the rod's point up, hold him tight, and reel in

slowly. He is quiet now, but will probably perform one antic on the surface before we get him in the net. There—that is the antic. Nothing very serious, but I see you dropped your pipe at that moment. You are not nervous, oh, no! I did not suggest that, did I? Now bring him up to the net and I will scoop him out, or you can handline him into the boat.

Only a small two-pounder, and hooked lightly! Hold him just behind the gills with that towel, and with these tweezers take out the hook. Now put him on the floorboards, and see what he can do. Talk about hand-springs! All right, he won't bite you now, although stories have been told of their barking and biting! A fine child, isn't he? No C 3 development! We may meet at some future date—say about ten years hence. I have a notion he will be at least 10lb. by then. Punch a hole in his tail, if you like, and you will recognise him again. Put him over gently, and don't squeeze his air bladder, on which he depends for diving into various depths. If the gills bleed slightly, they will heal, but the air bladder will not.

Look how he slowly submerges. A fine story he will have to tell the other fellows in the dormitory to-night!

Your bait is hardly touched, so in with it again, and repeat the performance of paying out the line. See that it wobbles well. Slow work for you! I can look at the duck, and I think I saw a big grebe just now, but he was too quick for me to get a glass on him. It is nearly lunch time. There goes the one o'clock bell at the Hall, and not a touch!

We will go where the old men like to sit—in the sun and out of the wind, by the old

boathouse—and put out a live bait, as before. While we are at lunch, I will try and tell you how to spin for pike. Trolling is merely mechanical, as the way of the boat is almost entirely responsible for the spin of the bait, but, if you are fishing from the bank or wading a river, it is up to you to do the trick, and it is not so easy. either. Hand me a ham sandwich, a hard-boiled egg, and a corkscrew, and I am right.

Now, imagine yourself in waders on the Vyrnwy, or any river where pike are found. You have your spinning tackle, exactly as you used this morning, though you can dispense with the lead, which is a nuisance, unless it is in the body of the bait. You have, in front of you, a big pool with a stream running through it. A shallow enables you to wade to the middle of the head of the pool, and you can cast either right or left. Put the check off the reel, by moving that button on the left-hand side of the reel plate. Now grip the rod above the reel with the right hand, and below the reel with the left hand, keeping the back of the first finger of the left hand against the under-part of the revolving plate. You can handle the reel now, just to put part of this advice into practice. Swing the bait, with about four feet of line below the rod point, and, taking your finger off the reel, let the line pay out freely, till the bait is dropping into the water, say ten yards away—quite far enough for a first venture. Re-apply pressure of the finger, to avoid over-running of the line—a deadly and frequent occurrence. Let the bait sink and, during this slight interval, change right hand for left, and use the right to manipulate the handle of the reel, unless you happen to be left-handed.

Draw across the stream from left to right, or right to left, reeling in slowly, as the stream will now help you to make the bait spin. Take another cast, somewhat longer, if you have the cheek to do so, and repeat the performance. Wade in a yard or two—don't get the water over the tops of your waders in winter—and do the same again. When you get too deep for safety, get on to the bank, and, still fishing down-stream, you can cover nearly the whole pool. The subsequent proceedings will be similar, and productive, or not, of a fish, but you will not have tried the most difficult manœuvre, i.e., spinning the bait down-stream.

The sickly or wounded fish invariably goes down-stream. The baffle up-stream is to the strong and the pike envisages the situation. The wobbler up-stream or across is not quite what *Esox* wants. He suspects there is "a catch in it" somewhere. He requires an easy and natural prey, if possible: it is only human nature. Give him a wobbler down-stream and it is "money for nothing. But how to do it is "another story."

Wade in from the bottom of the pool, and throw to right or left, up stream. It sounds easy, but it is not. The resistance of the stream is now minus and it is difficult to manage the spin from the reel.

Talking about reels, I know there are some on the market—Illingworth or Silex, to wit—that are almost automatic, but they are "beyond the dreams of avarice" to the ordinary man. No, you must do it yourself.

If it is only a short cast, pull the line with your own fair hand, and chance the slack, or coil in your hand, or on a tray strapped round your waist in front of you. You would stand

a good chance of first-prize at a fancy dress ball if you went in this "get-up," but it is practical.

Another way, as Mrs. Glasse says on the cooking of a hare, is to fish from the bank (which must be fairly clear) and dispense with a reel altogether—a tip for dry fly-fishing, which will be mentioned in a future article. You must have about 25 yards of line with a button at the end, and be content with a 20 yards cast. At the end of the cast, the button ought to come up against the lowest ring of the rod, but it often takes a turn or two round the butt, unless you check it in its wild career. You can handline the bait by drawing it until it arrives almost at your feet. One advantage of this method is that you don't have to pay for a reel, and another advantage is that you can draw quickly or slowly, as you desire. There is no reeling in. A disadvantage is that, if you leave the line trailing behind, with the button jumping about, like a pea on a hot plate, you soon spoil your line by attrition, and run a good chance of getting it into an unholy mess among loose twigs and bushes. So, if you have any Scottish blood in your veins, coil the line up roughly in your hand as you proceed from one position to another.

We will not try spinning from the bank: it is "a mug's game." You will tire of it soon on a lake. Weeds are nearly all round the border of the pool, and you will only have a few yards clear. Come out into the park and see if you can hit a tree. Fasten the plumbing bullet on the line and come on land.

Now, turn your back rudely on that tree. Swing arms, body and rod at an angle of something—I was not a wrangler—exactly as I advised you in fishing the river. The bullet

hit your leg, did it? Well, you had not taken the check off your reel, so it could not go far. Now have another try. That one darned nearly hit me, and I was standing as far off the tree as I thought necessary. Now, try again. A fair cast, ten yards long, but ten yards off the tree. Try again. That's better, and at every cast, in every way, you will do better and better. Well, that last cast was good enough to shew that you have got the idea, and you can practise on the lawn when you get home, and should put the bullet into a hat on the ground at 30 yards, both more or less, after a few days' practise.

Now, get into the boat, and we will troll again. While I light a cigar and smoke it during the intervals of talking, I must advise you on the subject of keeping rods, reels and tackle. Your rods must be carefully overhauled in the close season. If they look all right, you need only varnish the wrappings, but every ten years they should go to the makers. The reels should be carefully dried with the lines after a day's fishing, and a slight dressing of machine oil bestowed on them. Tackle must be kept in air-tight boxes, otherwise the hooks will rust. Look out, you are into a good fish! Do not get off your seat yet, and I will keep a slow way on the boat, as he is sure to come towards us. Keep the point of the rod up and a tight line, and the devil take the hindmost!

What does he feel like? You can't say? No, you will know in a few minutes. Not very big? Don't be too certain.

There he is! Looks a ten-pounder to me. Reel in slowly. If he "sounds," let him go. Twenty pounds, you say? Well, a twenty-pounder was taken here last year. Don't be

in a hurry. Keep a tight line. Now you can see him! 30lb.? No, "there ain't no such fish."

Now he is away, and deep, too! You can trust your tackle, but don't do anything but keep a tight line. He is coming up! By, Jove! he is bigger than I thought, but they always look big in the water. They always remind me of sucking pigs; I don't know why. I don't think our net is big enough for him, so I will take him by the eyes—thumb and forefinger. Steady! Keep a tight line.

I have got him, and a good fish he is. Get a "priest" and perform the last obsequies. Sixteen pounds by an erratic and somewhat rusty spring balance, and the best fish you are ever likely to get in your little life! If that bit of sport has not bitten into your soul, I am very much mistaken.

Hold out your hands, palms down. Tremor marked, but will pass away in a few minutes. Let me have your wrist. Pulse over 100. That will come down to normal quicker than the other. Good enough for to-day? I agree.

Pack the big one in that rush salmon carrier I brought, and put the little one separate. Don't let them lie together, or the plumage will suffer. You will have him set up in a case, of course!

The smaller fish I will have cooked according to Izaak Walton's Directions, if I can get oysters, and we will eat him on Friday night.

"This Dish of Meat is too good for any but Anglers or honest Men and, I trust, you will prove both; and, therefore, I have trusted you with this Secret."

MARCH.

MAKING A FISHERY.

"You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," we are told by the ancients, but you can form it as a receptacle to hold something. Every true fisherman ought to be endowed by Government with funds to enable him to live by a river in a house whence he can see the water gauge with a telescope from his bedroom window, or at least be able to get trustworthy information every morning as to the size and colour of the water from the village postman, who must, of course, himself be a fisherman. In default of this Utopian scheme panning out, it is wise to make the most of our immediate and practical surroundings and to prospect the neighbouring country for a likely "find."

I was the founder and am still the Secretary of a Fishing Club which added its quota to the "gaiety of nations." I have yet to write a full history of the Gowy Fishing Club, but my experience taught me a good deal. I learned about rivers from her. The lesson brought me much pleasure, if little profit, in making the acquaintance of the members (some of whom will not speak to me now), many of whom I should not otherwise have known.

You can get plenty of fun and some little sport, by taking in hand two or three miles of any stream in your own neighbourhood. Don't go too far abroad. A motor ride spoils it a bit, and a rod rack in the hall is "the only way."

BEWARE POLLUTION!

"Thou shalt not pollute thy neighbour's stream" ought to have been one of the Commandments (perhaps our Prayer Book Reformers will put this right) instead of which it is only one of the laws of this beautiful England of ours, which is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. I have put a Medical Officer of Health on the trail who let loose Inspectors and suchlike sleuth hounds, but the difficulty was to prove the act of pollution. There is now an "Alliance for Prevention of Pollution," with H.Q. at Nottingham, whose propaganda are based on the question of "Food, Health and Recreation." "People must be made to realise that it is as criminal to throw filth into a river as it is to throw it into a street. The pollution of our rivers is a scandal and a disgrace, and should be stopped without delay."

"We must give one word of warning, viz.: To be moderate and reasonable. To ask for a Bill which will upset industry would be fatal. We can say 'stop,' and ask for a clause which will prevent *further* pollution and make the penalty greater for the more recent cases which have arisen since the commencement of the War."

These extracts shew the "spirit" of the alliance, and let us hope it will not be "drowned."

You will probably know half-a-dozen men living within reasonable distance, who will entertain the idea of starting a small Fishing Club. They need not all be experts. It is perhaps better they are not. Get them together some day in a private room at the hotel in the nearest town, to discuss ways and means, and bring to the meeting rough agenda

which you can put before them. If one of them happens to be a local riparian owner who does not do much fishing, but is in sympathy with the sport, elect him to the chair, and order drinks. You will have got a long way on your journey.

The proposed Club Water extends from the road below the Mill up to the Black Brook—about three miles. The Chairman has kindly consented to allow the Club right-of-way over his length below and above the Mill. That's so, Major, isn't it? He knows old Smith, who is his neighbour, and will see him about the long meadow close to the wood, and he also knows the shooting tenants on the other side all the way up, and will do his best to get the fishing rights from them. They never wet a line. In any case, a lease for 7, 14 or 21 years should be drawn up and duly executed. A peppercorn rent should be paid.

On the question of right of fishing, may I quote from Sidney Wright, M.A., of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law? "With regard to private rivers, which are not navigable, the right of fishing belongs to the proprietor of the land of either side." "If a riparian owner has allowed the public to fish from the banks of the river, he can at any time withdraw his permission, without any reason, and no length of user by the public of the banks of the river for fishing will confer on them a legal right to such user." Passing over the distinction between a "several" or a "free" fishery, which lawyers have drawn up, and, therefore, doubtless can understand, I note he says, "Where a river divides land belonging to two different owners, each has a right to fish 'usque ad medium flum' (which means the middle of the

stream), and if either infringes on the other's water, either by fishing in it or by throwing a line or net into it from his own bank, he is liable to an action for trespass." And that's that; but as a matter of arrangement, the owner of each bank fishes the other side of the stream and "medium filum" takes a back seat, which is a sensible arrangement, but, of course, not legal.

Talking about trespassers, I should not be too hard on local men, as the few who fish, young Diggory I have in my mind, are fishermen born and bred. Their idea of Heaven is that they will there catch big, fat "snigs"—bigger and fatter than anything they have seen, much less caught, in this world. The snig or eel is said to be the favourite dish of "bookies," who can afford to pay for their luxuries, and if Diggory makes a bit by the transaction, it's more than he would in any other way of business with the "ring."

Of course, if your water is the "objective" of char-a-banc loads of Angling Clubs the nuisance must be stopped by prosecution or threats of such proceedings. If it is found that more than half-a-dozen villagers are in the habit of fishing the stream, they can be allowed to fish a stretch of deep water which is suitable for bottom fishing, and they can be charged, say, 2/6 for the season. Eels are as bad as pike for young trout, and are best out of the water. With regard to poachers of the animal kingdom, don't wage a ruthless war on them, except pike, and if you see an otter making a meal off a trout, it is worth the price. As for the heron or "yarn," let him alone, and admire the colours of his plumage and the stately flap of his wings, when once he has got into top gear

after a scramble through the two bottom ones when you come suddenly upon him. Don't shoot him, I pray you. It's like shooting a fox, and you cannot eat either of them.

What about the agenda? Keeper? No; cannot be done. We will get ex-Sergeant Jones to keep his eye on the water, and give him one day a week and the privilege of taking a friend. He will appreciate that, and it will be worth a pound a week to the Club.

Stocking? There is much advice to be got on this subject, and many suggestions, among which may be mentioned.

(1) Stocking with eyed ova—a dangerous proceeding, unless artificially screened off—one egg in a thousand reaches yearling stage.

(2) Turning in fry direct. Halford says this should never be attempted, and that opinion ought to be good enough for us. He advocates turning in yearlings or 2-year-olds. I propose we get as many yearlings as we find we can afford from any trout-farm you suggest, and no other fish of any sort or size. Grayling? No, I should not try this experiment. Rainbow? No, most certainly not. Well, let's meet next Sunday at 2 o'clock at the Mill and walk the water. You fellows will come up to tea with me and we can have a business meeting.

Have another? No; well try some of this tobacco. Thanks! I do like a cigar when I can get one, which is not often in these lean days.

The water is just about summer level, though February Fillydyke is only just out. You never can go by seasons nowadays. Cold enough for snow, and the pits very low. Snipe? There's hardly been a bird here this

season, except Jack, and very few of them. There are plenty in the Forest meres. Better feed, I suppose.

Now we will walk the length up-stream and cut across from the top of the water to my place. Ought to do it in two hours. The Mill-race is ours—goes with the Mill as far as the road, a good length, but ducks play the deuce on the only bit of gravel there is for a spawning bed on our water, and I fancy there are one or two pike, which have got up from the lower water. I'll leave a card on them before long. This pool above the Mill wants planting on the right bank for shade and insect harbourage. I will order a few hundred willow slips, with your consent, Major. They will help to keep the bank up, when the roots begin to spread. The water looks nice deep holding to-day, as the wheel is not going, but it's no use when the Mill is working. You must, in that case, either go below or higher up stream.

Here is the first bend, with a good old alder—good for making clogs, but better for fish. The lower branches want the least bit of thinning—otherwise a perfect pool with the stream running in through the reeds, when they come up in the spring. You cannot appreciate it to-day.

Now we come to a long length (old Smith was all right, and I will send him a box of cigars every Christmas), which is fairly straight, with deep water under one bank. Very good, but a little bare, and a few willows will complete the picture. Now it runs along a wood which will want cutting, but not too much. You want harbourage for trout, as for foxes. If you can get an under-hand cast here and there, you must be con-

tent. A left-hand cast? Yes, but is not the difficulty most of the sport, and what fun if you *do* hook a pounder? Bound to get off? Well, what if he does? If we were certain to land every fish we hooked, some of us would not fish much. We wont cut it till June, when we can see what the undergrowth looks like. Now, here is the last mile—not a tree or a bush, except those three tall poplars, but there's plenty of weed. Too much? No, you cannot have too much, for where there is weed there is food, and you can always cut weed—judiciously. Don't leave it to the agricultural labourer, as he will shave it close, like his own face on a Saturday night. We will have a day or two at weeding next summer with small hand scythes, set on long poles, and have the time of our lives. That's when you want beer and can drink it. I once told two keepers to cut weed one hot July day, and told them to get some beer. The bill came in for three gallons, and when I expostulated, one of them said, "Well, sir, there was two of us!"

Now we are at the top of the water; if you think of anything on the way home let it rip.

Looks a rotten sort of stream. Yes, it does; but did you notice its possibilities of holding fish? It never runs dry like a mountain stream, and is not up and down in a night. The field drains are most of them choked, and only let the water in slowly and you will seldom get in the fishing season a roaring torrent, which you cannot fish. No breeding grounds! Ah! there you have me. That's the weak point of the whole "caboodle." There are two small brooks, not on our ground, but higher up, and the byebrook above the Mill, on which we shall have to depend. We shall have to make

a rearing pond next year. Where can we do that? Above the Mill in the angle between the main stream and the byebrook. It simply means a pond twelve yards in diameter, the banks of which are made of the soil thrown out and which must be above flood level. A hatch in the bank, which can be raised or lowered, according to height of water, and a hatch at the other side of the pond. A few tons of gravel, and you have your nursery, capable of rearing, say, 200 yearlings every year. The feeding is a difficulty, but the miller's daughter may want a watch bracelet, or a diamond tiara more likely in these days, and she will feed the babies.

Kingfishers are not too frequent. Herons are too shy of anything like a scarecrow. It's only the toll of nature that the little beggars will have to pay. What is the mortality among human babies? I don't know, but it used to be something like 20 per cent., and they didn't all depend on the miller's daughter.

When we get in, we'll make rules and draw up a list of probable members.

Partridge calling? Yes, there is about one pair on every 100 acres. I don't know their infant mortality, but it's pretty high hereabouts. Foxes? Yes, but they don't take trout, thank goodness, in any large quantities.

Now here we are. Come in. Never mind your boots. Come into the billiard room, and we'll resolve ourselves into Committee.

Now we have got it.

(1) That the Club be called the New Fishing Club.

(2) That the number of members be limited to 12.

(3) Annual subscription (£3), payable on or before 1st January in each year. Members not intimating their intention to withdraw before that date will be considered liable for that year's subscription.

(4) Each member to have 12 day tickets for friends, and every riparian owner (not charging other than a peppercorn rent), to have power to grant day tickets to his friends.

Well, yes, he might, of course, give leave to 100 friends every day, but you will find he will play the game. *Experto crede.*

(5) SEASON.—1st April (or Saturday before Easter, if earlier), to 30th September.

BAIT.—Fly only.—Alexandra and such lures barred.

LIMIT OF TAKEABLE FISH.—Trout, eight inches—coarse fish no limit.

LIMIT OF BASKET.—Three brace.

(6) Tickets to be shewn to members or keepers on demand.

The keeper and ex-Sergeant Jones will have a warrant.

(7) No dogs allowed.

(8) Members are requested not to damage mowing grass.

Well, if they keep on the bank they will not do any harm. The stuff growing there is never carted with the crop. If any damage is done, the Club must pay for it.

Now, is there anything else?

The Major has told us he has got the right side of the shooting tenants, who want us to send £5 to the Infirmary every year. I propose we accept that offer with thanks, especially as they will let us have an agreement,

which will be binding during their tenancy, and will also instruct their keepers to warn off trespassers.

There's that bit of wood, you remember, running down to the river I've got that for 10/-. Old Smith will get £2 worth of cigars, so that the first year accounts will be roughly as follows :—By subscriptions (12 members at £3) £36. Expenditure will consist of rent, say, £8. Notice-boards and footbridges, £3. Various, £5. That will leave £20 for stock-ing.

We have not elected any officers. The present Committee is good enough, to carry on, with power to add to their number. Members will be elected in the usual manner at any meeting of the Club. If you do me the honour to elect me—no, not for Parliament or the Parish Council—I will act as Secretary and Treasurer with pleasure, and open a Club account at the Bank. This is absolutely necessary. Quite so, you know me. I will get quotations for yearlings, and let you know when they are coming.

* * * *

(Copy of letter from Secretary to Members
of Committee.)

"The yearlings will arrive at the Station on Saturday next at 2 p.m. I have arranged for transport of same, and they should reach the Mill at 2-30. I shall be glad if you can make it convenient to be there."

* * * *

Here we are! Good men! You have all turned up. Everything is O.K., and not a sickly fish in the lot. Just had a peep at the Station, but did not add any fresh water. This should only be done in case of extreme

urgency. There are eight cans. I propose emptying two of them below the Mill in the slack water. By the way, I got two small Jack with a big worm the other day in the first hour's fishing and never got a touch afterwards, so I think the odds are there are no more at present.

Then we can empty two cans about 100 yards above the Mill and the rest we shall have to carry up somehow and put the fish in here and there. They are not very heavy, and we can empty most of the water out before we start for the upper water.

Now get them unloaded by the bark, and feel the temperature of the water in the cans with your hand. Now feel the water in the river—20 degrees difference? I daresay there will be 10. Now bale in with the lid some of the river water into each can in turn. Go slow! A cold douche is very refreshing, but trouts' gills are delicate organs, and fish can get a sort of pneumonia from sudden shock. Temperature equal now? Very well. Bring two cans down to the shore of the Mill race. You cannot sink them—it is too shallow—so quietly turn them on their sides and let the little strangers find their way out. There they go, like sheep through a gap, and are taking up their positions at the edge of the stream. Now upend the can. Don't handle the fish.

Now we are eight men and a boy, so we can carry two cans up-stream and empty them, as before, and come back for the remaining four for the long trail.

There—that's satisfactory. We have sown the seed, and hope to reap the harvest—not this year or next. There is an odd trout here

and there, and some really good dace, which give good sport on the fly. I think they are more difficult to approach than trout, as they feed in shoals, and not always with their heads upstream. You don't "put them down" for as long a period as a trout, for five minutes after they have been scared by you or your rod, they will be up again. If you keep your place, they seem to get used to your presence. We may have to net them occasionally, if they get too plentiful, as they take the food of the trout.

Now let's get the empties back to the lurry. Then we'll have some tea and ham and eggs at the Mill. I own I am hungry. It's nearly six o'clock.

We will meet again when any business crops up, and the rearing pond can be taken in hand any time during the summer.

Good-night! What! Got a bottle of whisky and a syphon in his car? What a Moses! I beg to propose him as O.C. Comforts to the Club. A man of wide and far vision. Here's luck to the Club! Good-night!



APRIL.



THE SPORTSMAN'S WARDROBE AND OUTFIT.



You cannot go on borrowing tackle all the year round, and I'm hanged if I lend you either my gun or my shooting coat—so you will have to get your own outfit. You have been using my pike rod up to now, and I am

glad you did not buy one, as I have a scheme for you which will suit your pocket. It is somewhat a term of reproach to call a man "homo unius libri," but I suggest you become a man of one rod. The scheme is this: I know a clever little man—all little men are clever, or is that all clever men are little?—who will build you a rod to your specification. It will be a greenheart in two pieces and spliced. The connection is made in a few minutes, by means of a special splicing tape and a couple of clips. We will get him to rough it out, and fit it into an old butt I have got somewhere in my museum, and we will go and try it *with the reel and line*, with two or three temporary rings, every few days, until we are satisfied with the balance and "drive." There will be three tops for him to work his wicked will upon. The first will be for wet fly—not *too* whippy, as a long back cast wants some lifting. The second top will be the same length, but stiffer, for dry fly; and the third will be shorter and even stiffer than the last, for pike. The length over all will be 10ft. 6in. for the first two, and 10ft. for the pike rod. The dry fly top will give him most trouble, and we shall have to try it against the wind. It is a severe test, but it must pass that examination with honours. As our little man is a fisherman himself, he will get enthusiastic about it, and may forget to send you in the bill. Anyhow, he will do it for a couple of pounds, and you will be set up, as far as rods are concerned. A Nottingham reel will be necessary for pike fishing and a plain check. aluminium reel for trout ing. Although the outfit will not be quite up to date, it will be practical, and you will be able to hold your own on Test, Eden or the Norfolk Broads.

The rod will be fitted with bridge rings and a Bickerdyke top ring. We will try for a "heron-blue" stain and not too much varnish—a heliograph is useful on occasion, as General Bangs, "that most immoral man," found to his cost, but most fish know the Morse code, as flashed from your rod. It reads, "Lie doggo till that silly ass has passed." You will have to go a mucker on lines, as you will want an undressed silk line for pike and a dressed line for trout. The latter should be double tapered; fine at the extremity, and then a bulge, then fine again and swelling to normal diameter. In the matter of casts you can take your choice, but for *wet fly*, I seriously advise you to fish "hair"—it was probably used by the Ancient Britons, but it has its points. It is cheap and fairly easy to procure in Yorkshire. It is often 3ft. long, and it avoids superabundant knots. It is invisible and never gets into a tangle. But it will not stand a sudden jerk or very heavy strain. And here is its sporting recommendation. You will have to play a four-ounce trout into the net and refrain from skull-dragging. When you get a half-pounder on, it will be an artistic performance to bring him in, and if the trout is anything approaching a pound, you will have to do your very best, or he will break you. Good enough? Yes? That's the spirit. Hair it shall be for wet fly, but not for dry fly. You will have two or three tapered casts for the latter and a dozen fine points for the break—if it does happen—will be at the weakest link of the chain.

But we can go more fully into the subject as the seasons come round. Get all your flies "eycd," and keep them in small, labelled

tin match-boxes. Your casts will do very well between blotting paper (slightly damped at intervals), in an old letter-case. A net you will want, and our "little man" will fit you up—one on a short handle for dry fly, with a clip and an indiarubber ring to keep it secure on the strap of your bag. The same net on a long handle for wet fly. The latter will be shod with a spike and hook. The one for safety in wading, and the other for disengaging the cast from overhanging branches.

Rather awkward to manage both rod and long net when you have got a fish on? Not at all. Get a curtain ring, which will slip easily over the handle. Tie 2ft. of cord to the ring and fasten the other end with a running noose round your arm above the elbow, and see what happens. You can wade, using the net as a guide to depth, and when you hook a fish, let go the net. It is anchored to your arm, and cannot slip through the ring, and is always at hand when you want to net your fish, whether you are fishing up or downstream. Don't forget this tip—it is worth remembering.

Something to carry the fish or game? A fairly large haversack, with a piece of strong netting on the outside forming a purse, is good enough. It will hold two bottles, thermos, lunch, tackle and—fish? Well, yes, it will carry fish or game. If you have a bag with two compartments it will be better.

Waders will strain your bank balance, but you must have a pair. Get strong ones and rubber shoe brogues, and a couple of pairs of large, thick socks, to go over the wader feet, to prevent chafing of the brogues. Keep the socks up by means of strong, rubber bands.

Now you will have to see the manager of the bank which staggers under the responsibility of your account. Tell him from me (I had a painful interview with him last week) that you must have a gun next August, and that it will cost about fifteen pounds. If he faints at the suggestion, I should loosen his collar and call the head-clerk to attend to him and transfer your account to another bank. If he does not turn a hair and asks you whose moor you are going to shoot, tell him you do not know a grouse from a grilse, but only want to have a go at woodpigeons in that month. He will then probably smile and mark your account up to the required overdraft.

I will guarantee to get you a secondhand, hammerless gun—12-bore—left barrel slightly choked—for less than fifteen pounds. The change out of this amount will buy a canvas gun case, a cartridge extractor and whistle combined, a dog-chain or slip, and a small bill-hook for making blinds for pigeon-shooting. No, not a motor-car as well, unless it is a 1906 model. I could have done it for you in 1919, bar jokes.

Never handle a hammer gun, and make a point of feigning illness if one of the shooting party is using that weapon. It may save your life. I have seen—no, I will not tell you what I have seen, except to say that I have seen enough of hammer guns and the accidents they cause to last me my time, which is short enough now without running risks of that sort.

Now about your wardrobe.—Starting from above downwards, you will not want a silk hat. The ancients used to fish, shoot and play cricket in them, but we have deteriorated in the last hundred years from the picturesque

point of view of our sporting garb. You will require only one hat, but it must satisfy the exacting requirements of the examining board. It must be inconspicuous. It must be rain and sun proof. The best I ever struck is one made of goat hair, in black and grey check, adaptable to cover eyes or neck, which fulfils all the requirements. It was given to me by a sportsman employed on railways in India. I must ask him for another. Mine is twenty years old, and is beginning to shew signs of wear.

Collars and shirts are a matter of taste, but beware of a white collar. Khaki is the colour, and flannel the material for both. A stock is comfortable, and smart, if well tied.

Do not be persuaded to buy a shooting coat. You have, or ought to have, an old lounge coat. It will do admirably, if a brown or heather mixture homespun. I have one pre-War—South African War I mean—which I have kept locked up in my safe for fear it goes to a jumble sale—it would not fetch a shilling. It has leather strapping on both shoulders and has inside waterproof pockets, each of which will hold a rabbit. I do not call them hare pockets, as we leave our hare for the beagles.

In one of them you will find a flat tin case, which will hold a nice dish of mushrooms—Lord, the beautiful lots of these delicacies I have seen reduced almost to ketchup, if carried in a handkerchief or the game bag. It will carry any other loot you may "snaffle," in the shape of ferns, plants, eggs, etc., and is useful on a really wet day to carry spare cartridges.

All the buttons are cut off the coat, except the top one and the collar button. The storm-

proof cuffs are so frayed that they are to be bound with soft leather for the coming season. The pockets have flaps, and are lined with strong material, which can be turned inside out for cleaning. Above all, there is plenty of room across the shoulders, although there are no gussets or such "gadgets," which always remind me of a dressmaker. There is not much waistline about the garment, but it is a comfortable coat, and I think I shall be buried in it.

A leather waistcoat and a Balaclava knitted helmet for Arctic expeditions, and a woolly Cardigan will be the "next articles." Now as to "unmentionables." Slacks every time for comfort. Grey flannel for summer, and khaki Bedford cord for winter. They are not worn by the "best people," so if you want to sacrifice comfort to appearance, you can wear knickerbockers or breeches with or without puttees, gaiters, anklets or spats. You can play a variation of tunes with these, but avoid anything that looks new.

Boots and shoes are a matter of personal taste. Some men swear they cannot walk all day without about three pounds of leather and nails on each foot. Personally I wear the lightest of shoes and spats, just to keep the dirt out, and (shall I admit it?) knickerbockers for shooting, but always slacks for fishing in waders.

Gum boots with loose tops, into which you can tuck your slacks, and with leather nailed soles, are very useful both for shooting in a wet country, or fishing where wading is unnecessary or not allowed.

Beware of gum boots with rubber soles. They will let you down in more senses than one, and are the very devil on a slippery plank.

As to socks and stockings, avoid heavily darned heels. Get the stockings re-footed and the socks will be welcomed as "rubbers" in the house.

You will want a waterproof. Everyone wants a waterproof that is cool and comfortable and—waterproof, and they are still wanting. Buy one of those adaptable ground-sheets, price about half-a-crown, and you will not be far off your ideal.

An old dogskin glove for the left hand is useful when shooting. It keeps the fingers warm, and serves as a protection from thorns when negotiating a fence. Hunting togs? No. You are a "poor" sportsman, and Shanks' pony does not carry a pink coat and buckskin leather and boots.

There are probably a hundred things I shall think of "going home in the cab," but I venture to say that you have laid the foundation of your wardrobe and outfit, and will not regret the purchase of anything I have put on the list. Make an appointment with our little man as soon as possible, as the alder bud is nearly as big as a trout's eye, and then the trout will take the fly. The weather at present reminds me of the immortal John Leech's "Punch" picture.—Title: Thank goodness! Flyfishing has begun.—Scene: The banks of a stream.—Weather: Snowing and blowing.—Dramatis personæ: Fisherman and Miller.—The latter remarks: "Don't they really. Perhaps they will rise better towards the cool of the evening. They mostly do."

But Rudyard Kipling directs the "feet of the young men" in the way they should go in the spring time.

" Now the Fourway Lodge is opened,
 Now the Hunting Winds are loose—
 Now the Smokes of Spring go up to clear
 the brain;
 Now the Young Men's hearts are troubled
 for the whisper of the Trues,
 Now the Red Gods make their medicine
 again.

.
 He must go—go—go away from here!
 On the other side the world he's
 overdue.
 'Send the road is clear before you when
 the old Spring fret comes o'er you,
 And the Red Gods call for you!"



MAY.

TROUT FISHING.

WET FLY.

If you want to be popular up North among
 your fellow-anglers you must not talk about
 " chuck and chance it " in tones of derision.
 The high priests and officials of the Dry-fly
 Cult do so, but they have the good sense and
 taste not to go North. They miss a great
 deal of sport, owing to their blindness, but
 they have a feeling in the back of their minds,
 if they are honest—and are not all
 anglers honest?—that they will not get
 much of a basket if they fish "wet,"
 and they are rather doubtful about
 the result, if they stick to their special
 methods and fish "dry." They will do all
 right if they mix it a bit, and will find plenty
 of opportunity to " wipe the eye " of the wet

fly man. But we must not mix it now, or you will get confused, and that is a state of mind of which sportsmen especially should beware.

You will want your waders and brogues, and you might as well bring your gum boots—rod with two tops (leave the pike top at home) in case of a breakage—trout reel and line—hair casts and flies—long-handled net—bag—etc., etc. You can pack my B.S.A. rifle. There are rabbits. You have got the hair in your pocket? You are a bright boy. Where did you get it? From a stallion's tail, up Aysgarth way. It looks the right stuff. A good transparent colour and plenty of "life" in it. Now we will pick out 50 of the best hairs, and trim them to lengths of about two feet. That will last you for the season. Don't keep it for next.

Put the bunch, bar what you want for immediate use, into an old tobacco pouch. Now we will make up a cast. A bowl of lukewarm water, please. Put a few strands of the hair in, and light a pipe. You have always got that old briar in your mouth, but mostly cold. It is wonderful what a lot of smoking one does that way. Just as well, with tobacco at its present price. I believe I could have got into Parliament at the last election on cheaper tobacco and beer, and never mentioned the Entente Cordiale or the housing question. Better to leave these alone, it seems. But we must not mix up politics with fishing. Nothing must be introduced that can in any way distract the attention from the matter in hand. You know the awful position of the man in the story, "The lady and the salmon."

Now as to flies. I have often wondered how many flies there are in entomology. Say there are two thousand, for the sake of argument. Then a priori (I think that sounds well, if it means nothing), there are two thousand five hundred in the tackle dealers' list. Some authorities—duce et auspice Cholmondeley-Pennell—are "colourists," and others, with Ronalds and Stewart as leaders, are "formalists." No doubt they are still discussing the question. We shall join them later on. Some swear by hackle, partridge, snipe or waterhen. But the fun of the whole thing is that the wet-fly man is fishing the larva, which is supposed to imitate the fly in its embryo stage, before it bursts into the imago. If this is so, he ought to present to the fish something between a hayseed with legs and a wood louse, and the question of colour is immaterial. "In medio tutissimus ibis"—the ibis was always the safest of birds—and you will find that hackle, representing motion, and colour, representing the *ignotum pro magnifico*, are both points that need to be considered.

Remember, you are going to fish down-stream—*secundum artem*—and although men who are authorities, because of achievement, will tell you that wet-fly up-stream is more deadly than down-stream, you will be taking on a difficult proposition. You will be wading up-stream, which is tiring work in strong water. You will be casting, on an average, every five seconds, and your wrist will soon be sending out S.O.S. messages to what brain you have. If you get bang into a rise on the surface it may pay you to change your tactics, though those conditions which look so much like the chance of a lifetime are usually

most disappointing. You find yourself changing your fly every two or three minutes, finally winding up with a biggish sea trout pattern, and foul-hooking a three-ounce trout, which feels like a three-quarter pounder, till you get a sight of him with the hook in his back fin. Then it is you see the "navies" of duns which you read about, and get a surprise as to the number of fish in a stream you have often thought did not hold a trout. Every trout is "up," and they will rise under your nose and just behind you in a most tantalising way.

But the rise that you fish down-stream is mostly under water. They are taking that hayseed with legs, and do not break the water very often, except to take the imago, as it floats down like a fairy ship.

The actual cast can only be demonstrated on the water, and I propose to leave the description of this till we get on the river-bank. But we can consider the question of flies now. Give me a match, please. The nomenclature of flies varies with localities. Up North you will learn about such fearful fowl as the blue partridge and purple snipe—suggestive of lobster patties taken too late at night. Down South, they talk of a pink Robinson, which is worse to contemplate, but for the most part, the Southerners do not describe the hackle, and are content to say "blue or olive dun." Many distinguished anglers have flies named after them—sort of god-children. Some flies have fancy names, such as Coachman and Little Chap.

There is no wisdom in getting a large collection of artificial flies. We must keep our list within reasonable limits. March Brown (male and female), Greenwell's Glory, Coch-

y-bondhu, Blue Dun, Purple Snipe, Partridge and Woodcock, both with various coloured bodies. This selection will do for early months—March to June. Later you must have Alder, Coachman, Yellow Sally, Hare's Ear, Black Midge, Sedge (various sizes). There are 2,480 others, as I remarked before, if my calculations were correct, but we have twenty of the best. Number 1 or 0 for early months, and 00 for later will be small enough for the size of hook.

To go into a few particulars of the above flies, you must know that the March Brown female has a body made from the sandy-coloured fur of a hare's ear and light orange wool, while the male body consists of the dark part of the ear. Both are ribbed with yellow silk or gold wire. The wings in both cases are mottled hen pheasant, or partridge tail bunched. Greenwell's Glory is named after Canon Greenwell, and is a good fly in Devonshire, as, indeed, it is anywhere. Coch-y-bondhu is the Bracken Clock or beetle, and looks like a cross between a golliwog and a ferocious spider. The Blue Dun is good for cold days, and the natural fly changes to the Red Spinner (or is it March Brown that makes this change?) on warm evenings. The latter fly is best represented artificially by the Red Quill, of which more anon. Purple Snipe will kill fish in a snowstorm—a good recommendation if you are an early bird on the water. The partridge, woodcock and snipe provide the feathers for scores of flies, all of which are good killers.

Of flies for later months, the Alder is, in its season, which is June, and out of its season, the most killing fly of the lot. If I was limited to one fly for all seasons on all rivers,

I would pass over the March Brown even. You can fish it wet or dry, big or small. You can drop it lightly, or you can flop it on the water with a distinct splash. The body is made with mulberry silk, with peacock herl. Legs are black starling feather, from the back of an old cock bird. Wings, brown speckled hen. There are several other dressings. I *must* read to you what Charles Kingsley, in his "Chalk Stream Studies," says in praise of the Alder.

By the way, you told me the other day you never had read any of his works or his life. Happy man! You have got the greatest treat of your life in front of you. You must read his "Life and Letters" first, so as to get an impression of his many-sided nature. His letters are serious, and yet bubbling over with humour on occasion, which is often. He is very much in earnest about everything, and fearless in his opinions. *O si sic omnes!* From the angling point of view, the great charm of his writings is that he was a naturalist first, and then an angler—so few men are both.

Now listen—I will not quote too much.
 "She will kill on till September, from that
 happy day on which
 You find her out on every stalk
 Whene'er you take a river walk,
 When swifts at eve begin to hawk—

O thou beloved member of the brute creation!
 Songs have been written in praise of thee;
 statues would ere now have been erected to
 thee, had that hunch back and flabby wings
 of thine been 'susceptible of artistic treat-
 ment.' But ugly thou art in the eyes of the
 uninitiated vulgar; a little stumpy old maid,

toddling about the world in a black bonnet and a brown cloak, laughed at by naughty boys, but doing good wherever thou comest, and leaving sweet memories behind thee; so sweet that the trout will rise at the ghost or sham of thee. How have I seen . . . the great trout rush from every hover to welcome thy first appearance. Beloved alder fly! would that I could give thee a soul (if indeed thou hast not one already, thou and all things that live) and make thee happy in all æons to come."

And now I'll get you a cup of tea, and while it is brewing, you must listen to what Hardy Brothers, of Alnwick, say about casting the fly:—

"To make an ordinary overhead cast correctly, the tyro should begin with a gut line not more than two yards long and with two flies. Supposing then, the rod and line correctly balanced, and mounted with a suitable gut line and flies; let him draw from the reel as much line as once and a half the length of his rod, then holding the end fly between the finger and thumb of the left hand, while grasping the rod a little above the reel with his right, he should gently wave it until he gets the required momentum to carry out the line, when he should release the fly, making at the same time a cast, in line with the spot where the flies are intended to alight, care being taken that the point of the rod is not allowed to drop further than at right angles to himself.

"The best way to learn is to fish downstream, as should the cast not be made correctly, the stream will float the line and flies out straight. To make a fresh cast, raise the point of the rod upwards, in order to get as

much line clear of the water as possible. With a smart lift-back over the shoulder, slightly inclining the rod's point to the right, he must throw the line clear behind him, avoiding all elbow work, and without allowing the rod point to go back further than an angle of 45 degrees to the body. Having done this, a moment's reflection will shew him, that as the line went back in a curve, it will take an instant to straighten after the rod is thrown back into the required position for the forward cast, and this is what may be termed the 'pause.' [This is very important, as the line must have time to straighten before the return cast is made. If this is not given, it is possible he will hear a slight crack, signifying that the flies are gone. Throwing the flies back correctly is quite as important as throwing them forward.] Now drive the line and flies forward, by smartly bringing the rod down into the horizontal position again; in doing this, aim at a point, say two or three feet above where the flies are intended to fall; they must not be thrown at, but above, the water, so that they may fall softly. If these directions are carefully studied, it will be seen that there are three movements and a 'pause.' 1. Raise the rod point—get as much line clear of the water as possible. 2. Make the backward lift—then 'pause' until the line gets time to straighten. 3. Now make the cast over the place intended, and the movements are complete. Patience—careful attention to instructions—and perseverance are needed.

"Having in some degree mastered this, our tyro should extend his line (about a yard at a time) until he finds he can fairly command the water being fished."

And again :—

“Where and how to fish. He must now choose how and where he will fish, and in this, experience only will guide him, keeping in mind that the wind at his back is an advantage, and that he should, whenever possible, fish up and across stream, and with the sun in his face. We will suppose the seat of intended sport to be one of our sharp gravelly north-country streams. Begin at the bottom or tail of the pool, and fish all the likely parts across and up-stream, wading gently and fishing every yard of likely water to the neck of the stream. As soon as a fish is hooked, it should be brought down-stream, and played in that part which has been fished, so as not to alarm other feeding fish. Where the water runs fast, frequent casts must be made, as the stream carries the flies down quickly. The idea of fishing up-stream is : Fish lie with their heads pointing up-stream, and do not see the angler till his flies have covered them ; secondly, they take the drowned fly in a perfectly natural manner as it floats down the stream, and are much more liable to be hooked. Fishing down-stream, although easy, and often adopted by anglers from the bank, is a very poor business, as six fish will be missed for every one hooked. Let your maxim be, ‘Fish up and fish fine.’ ”

These are the authorities I mentioned a few minutes ago. I never “buck” against experts when I meet them in a smoking room, but on paper it is easier. The method they recommend is neither wet nor dry—like the brave old Duke of York’s men, who were “neither up nor down.” In fact, their flies are only just under the surface, and I expect, in most cases, are a winged pattern, which,

of course, come naturally down the stream, and cannot be "worked" as the hackled fly when fished wet. I know I am on dangerous ground, so I will get off it.

We will go next week up to the Queen of the Westmorland villages. I shall not tell anyone her name, or they will go and make love to her. We shall have to make an early start. The only way I can be got out of bed at six o'clock is to have fried bacon, sizzling and savoury, carried to the bottom of the stairs, from whence I can both hear and smell it. This is one of the many advantages of living in a small house. That is the fly that will make me "rise." And the pipe after the tea and marmalade that accompany the meal! Shades of Sir Walter Raleigh! His memory ought to be kept as green as that of Isaak Walton. Is there a Raleigh Club? Is there a Walton Club? I fancy they are two old-fashioned. Isaak Walton would probably be regarded as an "old buffer" by most of our modern anglers, and his writings not up-to-date. It is a practical world, my masters, and the office and the club and the motor blot out the vision of Venator when he says, "So when I would beget Content and increase Confidence in the Power, and Wisdom, and Providence of Almighty God, I will walk the Meadows by some gliding Stream, and there contemplate the Lillies, that take no Care, and those very many other various, little living Creatures that are not only created, but fed (Man knows not how) by the Goodness of the God of Nature; and, therefore, trust in Him."

By the way, what about that cast we were going to make up? That's the worst of fellows like you, who talk so much! Take two

lengths of hair, and, holding them parallel, but with the ends pointing in opposite directions, tie each to the other with a half-knot. Draw the knots together, and for the present leave the ends long. Add two more lengths in a similar manner and make a loop at one end. You now have an eight-foot cast. At the point tie on an eyed fly. Pull the second knot slightly apart, and through the loop thus made insert the "dropper" fly, tied on to about two inches of hair, which has a large double-knot at the free end. Close the running knots, still leaving the ends long. When you want to use the cast, tighten up all knots and cut off the ends, leaving a small piece projecting, in case the hair "draws," as it will do in all probability. You can add two more flies, if you like, but at first must be content with two, until your casting is reliable—indeed, it is as well if you begin with only the tail fly on the cast. However, next Monday will see us on the water, and further practical instructions can be more easily given and understood.

Hurrah! Here we are, slowing up at the Station. There's old Bill with the wagonette, and in ten minutes the curtain will go up. There, what about that for a bit of scenery? A straggling village—no two houses alike—set in a street 70 yards wide, with the strip of road running through the village green. The old church—elms—rooks—and here is the village inn, which is our destination. A rod leaning against the wall and a few wet foot-marks outside tell their own tale. I vote we order ham and eggs, and go out for a bit of casting practice before the evening rise.

Put on your waders before tea, to save time, and I will unpack the rods and get out the tackle.

You could not have eaten three poached eggs and half a ham at home? No, of course, you couldn't. You will do better at breakfast, as I hope you will start with a half-pound trout. Fish those casts out of the slop bowl and get a move on. Give me the rod. Binding the splice from below upwards with the adhesive tape, you will admit that it is a firm job, and the rod loses none of its pliancy. Put the reel on and draw the line through every ring and through the top. Tie a knot on the end of the line. Pull the top of the cast next to the loop through the loop, and into the noose thus formed push the reel line. Draw the noose tight, and pull the reel line tight up to the knot. That's right—and tight. Cut off the "enda" of the knots now, and tie on a fly. What fly? Well, the G.O.K. and the A.D.T. are recommended by the best authorities, so we will take the first fly that comes to hand. Partridge and crimson. Right, put it on. Push the hair point through the eye, tie a half-knot above the shank, pull tight and cut off the end—not too close. Now you are ready. I'll bring the net and bag for the fish. I shall leave my rod at home, as I must be schoolmaster, and nothing else to-night. Now here is the old bridge. Bridges don't seem to alter—they don't lose their hair and teeth—they don't get gout or rheumatism—they don't get angry or talkative. What the river tells them is a secret between the two. The news it gets from the puppets which pass along or loiter, leaning over its parapets, is usually associated with false prophecies about the weather, which trout can more surely foretell, or details of markets and prices most pessimistic in their tone. Young lovers seldom linger on the bridge—the silhouette is too clear. But I think I have

previously remarked that nothing must be allowed to interfere with fishing, and here I am talking absolute rubbish.

We will go up-stream, straight to a big pool, and a slack and longish run out of it, which will give you fishing for the evening. If we cut across the meadow, it will save walking a quarter of a mile of water. Here we are—a nice water—just right—falling and clearing to a good colour.

Take your stand at the head of the pool and cast out to the far bank. Let the line tighten on the stream, and let it go till it reaches the near bank. Now draw off one yard of line and repeat the performance. Now draw off two or three yards, and this time play the "sink and draw" act. Let the line "drown" as much as possible, and by slowly raising and lowering the point of the rod, a movement will be conveyed through the line and cast to the hackles of your partridge and crimson, which will alternately open and close, a movement which simulates life and "flash." I have lately been reading Francis Ward's "Animal Life under Water," which is a marvellous record of patient and close observation. Just one cinematograph series of an otter playing with a pike under water, as a cat plays with a mouse, will perhaps be enough to illustrate the wonderful methods of the author, who is, of course, also the observer. He makes a great point of "flash," whether of fish or bird or insect under water, but the whole book is tense with points of interest to the naturalist and the sportsman.

A little quicker with the draw and you will do all right. Felt something? What did you do? Nothing. Well, next time tighten the line—don't strike.

Something on? Keep your rod point well up, and begin to reel in slowly. Remember, you are fishing hair. You will eventually bring him into the slack water to your right, but just for the moment you must drown your fish in the strong water. Keep reeling in, and try to get back to the land, as you will have more command from there. Now, bar accidents, he is yours. He is quiet on the surface. If he "salutes" or jumps out of the water, lower your point, or he will fall on the tight line and break the cast. Accidentally? No, I believe they mean it, as they do when they "weed" you and hold on by their teeth. Don't move to him, but put the net in the water where you mean to bring him in. Now he is over the net. Raise the net smartly, keeping a tight line, and bring him in in triumph. You really did that much better than I thought you would. He's a nice Eden trout—six ounces—and will cut as pink as a salmon.

Now you can put on another fly—woodcock and yellow, just to give a choice of colour. You are at a disadvantage when trying to hook your fish, as you are pulling the fly out of his mouth, unless you wait till he turns. This means a slow tightening of the line after he has "pulled." By the time you are eighty, you may be able to "fasten" five times out of six. It is so in all things. Life is too short, and by the time you really can do anything worth writing home about, you will find an old gentleman with a beard and a scythe pretending to cut thistles, who will order you to pass along. Yes, life is too short, but I have great hopes of a future state, where we shall benefit by our experience here below, and be able to "carry on." What baskets we shall make! During the singing of the hymn after

the sermon, the collection will be taken, so you had better wade into the pool again, and try your luck. I shall not be far off, and will be back by the evening rise. I want some tobacco and some b—b—bacon, which I can get at the pub. near the station. It's only just across the meadow.

Well, what luck? I got my tobacco and bacon in a mug. What have you done? Got three more—all on the Woodcock and yellow--and lost a "plugger"—broke you in that sunk tree. Well, that's better than dragging them out with a ship's hawser, and you will certainly rise more fish.

Now it's time to get on to the stream below the pool. The evening rise has begun, and may last only half-an-hour. Don't raise your hopes too much, and, above all, don't get flurried. Get into the middle of the stream and fish very slowly half the length. The other half you can fish after the rise is over, and I'll bet you sixpence you will do more in the second half.

Not landed a fish, although the water was boiling, and you could not see what they were taking. No, you want a pair of Sam Weller's magnifying glasses to see that. Now it's getting darkish, but you must go in again, and you need hardly move your place. Into something heavy? I am afraid it is a chub, but he will teach you a lot, if you can get him out yourself. You have had him on ten minutes. What is he doing? Going round you? Well, the next time he gets above you, put a bit more pressure on him, and chance him with the net, as he comes past. Missed him? Never mind. He may be on his side next time, and you will have a better target.

Got him? Good man. Wade ashore and turn him out. By George! he's a three-pounder, if he's an ounce, and old Bill swears he likes them better than trout.

Now you have done enough for to-night, and we have got fish for breakfast. You certainly have got "hands," or you would not have netted the "skelly." Enjoyed the whole thing? That's right. It's a great game, though how many people does one meet who say they have not got patience enough to sit on a bank all day. Patience! Sit on a bank! You sometimes sit down in the river. I remember taking a novice out fishing. Neither of us had waders. I was over my shoe tops in a few minutes. He declined to go in, for fear of catching cold! The next thing I saw, after half-an-hour's absence, was his shirt drying on a rock, and found him a keen fisherman for ever, as I think you will be, though you have not wet your shirt!

JUNE.

TROUT FISHING.

DRY FLY.

I do not usually worry you about statistics or dates, because I never can remember them, but it is a fact that the dry fly method is of comparatively recent date. In 1880 an American angler, Dr. Prime, author of "I go a-Fishing," stated that it was "impossible" to keep the fly dry when fishing. Probably in this year of Liberty, Americans know more about "dryness" than they want, and "extra sec" is the brand they affect.

The art only came into general practice in the early eighties. Ogden, of Cheltenham, was a pioneer about 1840 in the manufacture of floating flies, and in 1860 H. S. Hall used the eyed hook which Wheatley invented. The early eighties seems a deuced long time ago, but I still have pleasant memories of getting my first lesson in the dry fly art on the Darent at St. Johns and Lullingstone about that time. There were split cane rods and quill-bodied flies and fish. There are more rods and flies at St. Johns now than ever there were, but they are used on the Test or Scottish salmon rivers, for the Tarningham trout have nearly all gone.

Well, Postumus, it is no good deploring the flying years, and however many prizes we got at the Sunday School, the good old days will not return, so just ring that bell and then go out into the hall and shout for someone to bring the whisky, and we will have a heart-to-heart talk about your initiation into the rites and mysteries of the dry fly. The night is young, and your people always know you are either here or in the police cells late at night. Have you been practising casting? Not satisfied with your distance? Sixteen yards, fairly accurate with the wind, and only twelve against it. Quite good enough. Any fish that sees you at that distance behind it is a Salvation Army leader who walks backwards and directs the procession. If you do want to get a bit more line out, pull a foot or two of slack off the reel, and when you make the cast let the slack run out. You will find it will not interfere with accuracy of casting to any great extent.

Now we cannot do anything to-night, but there are lots of interesting points to consider.

If a trout is rising under a bank, try and "willow" your fly off the bank or the grass growing on it. The fall of the fly is most natural, but don't try it off an alder bush, or you will be hung up for a certainty. Talking of alders, rub your new gut cast with the alder leaf to take off the glitter. Every cast you make over a fresh fish, draw the last foot of the gut through finger and thumb wetted with saliva. Have a piece of well-oiled rag tied into the middle of an old handkerchief, and draw the last half-dozen yards of the reel line through the rag every now and then during the day. This keeps the reel line floating, and avoids drag on the cast and fly, a most potent cause of drowning the fly.

Now about paraffin. *Don't use it, unless it is absolutely necessary.* It is like buttering a cat's feet to make it stay at home. If pussy wants to go away, nothing will stop it doing so, and if a fly will not float, nothing will make it do so. Paraffin will keep it from *drowning*, but a floating fly is one that rides on the water on the tips of its hackles, and to a certain extent on its quill body, and if the wings are properly balanced, you see the nearest approach to the imago that man can produce. Put the artificial by the side of the natural, and you will wonder. No, you will not wonder which is the natural and which is the artificial—but you will wonder why on earth the trout ever takes the artificial!

So, if you do apply oil, only touch the hackle, and remember that there must be a prismatic film on the water surrounding the oiled fly, which I do not think the trout regards as a new sauce "à l'huile."

At intervals, and especially after taking a fish, dry the fly in your handkerchief, then

whisk it about in the air and leave it flying while you are looking for a rising fish.

Now about flies. Red Quill, Wickham, Olive Dun (pale and dark), Iron Blue, Alder, Sedge (large and small). If you want any more, are they not written in the catalogues of the tackle-dealers? But if you do not have sport with the half-dozen above mentioned, you will not do much with the rest.

The Sedge is useful in that last hour of daylight, when you cannot see a floating fly, but can hear and just see the big fish rising near the bank. Throw over the place, and, at any indication of a rise, tighten. It may be as well to take off your fine point, as you must hold on to anything big, or he will break or weed you in the darkness.

Examine the barb of the hook every now and then, especially at night. It may be broken off by hitting a stone in the back cast. I remember a big night rise on Eden in which my companion, fishing just above me, complained of fish after fish "coming short." As this had been going on for nearly an hour, I advised him to look at the hook and, sure enough, the barb was broken, and he had missed a great chance of a basket on the purple snipe.

As a rule, fish taken on dry fly are hooked lightly just inside the mouth (sometimes they will eject the fly, if given time), but if you find you are hooking them in the tongue, it means they are "on the job," so do not waste time, but "get on with it."

You will want a kneeling pad. Get a piece of carpet felt covered with an old motor inner-tube. The saddler will put on three straps and buckles, one above, one below, and a third at the bend of the knee. If you have it fitted

for the right knee so much the better, but in this case have the buckles on the inner side of the knee, so as to avoid the line fouling them. You very often will have a loop of slack line reaching to your feet which you have not had time to reel in.

Send for two tapered gut casts and a dozen fine drawn points and a dozen of each of the flies I recommended. Meet me next Monday at six o'clock at the Mill, and although the river is by no means a typical chalk stream, it offers opportunities for the dry fly methods and a good many difficulties. There will be an odd trout rising, and if it is a nice, warm, still evening, the dace will be rising all over the place.

You will not often get the chance of fishing waters where the 13-inch limit obtains, but you may get the opportunity of fishing dry fly when nothing else will make a basket. I remember going up to Kirkoawald with two friends. The Eden was in flood, and my wet fly purists declined to go out fishing, but paid a visit to the Church and the Vicarage, where they—one of them, at any rate—were rather keen to see the Vicar's daughter. She was a remarkably pretty girl, and, with the river in flood, the time was not wasted. I, however, made for the nearest beck, and found the Croglin—I think that was the name—coming down from the moorland a bright amber colour. The sun came out strong, and with it a hatch of duns, and at every pool I got two or three fish with a red quill. I finished up with fifteen nice trout, and got back for dinner, as the evening rise was spoilt by cold showers coming on about six o'clock, and I had done enough. By the way, you will not order late dinner or, if you do, you will eat it by yourself. The

evening rise must happen between seven and nine o'clock. Have a thick tea and a sandwich for supper. Better for your liver than a late, heavy meal. However, "chacun á son goût." I knew a man who always ate a whole apple pasty and three bottles of ginger beer on return from fishing, and pasties in Westmorland cover a plate. It looked as dangerous as night flying, but his Insurance Company either allowed or were ignorant of the risk.

About the coat and hat you will wear; you can put on a light dust coat and a light grey hat. No, you will not be landed in an asylum. It is all a question of background. This will be the sky, as there are few trees on dry fly streams, and I will only refer you once more to Ward's book on "Animal Life Under Water" to convince you that under certain conditions light colours are almost invisible to the fish.

Just gone six, but there is no hurry. I have walked a mile of the water on my way down and only saw one trout moving—a roving fish under that big willow, where a small bye-brook comes in. It is great sport stalking a rover, because he is not always feeding with his head up-stream, but sometimes meets you face to face on his travels. He does not cover much ground, but just lazily swims in circles, sucking in very quietly any surface food that comes down or from above. We will go for him now, as he may be still rising. Keep down, and peep over the bank as far off as possible, and report. Still rising, is he? Good. Now put on a red quill, and, as all your tackle is dry, it will float for ten minutes, if necessary, near his beat. If you actually see him open his mouth to take your fly, count three slowly, before you

tighten. You will never do it, I know, but if you pull the fly off the water before he has taken it, don't say I did not warn you. Go on, and put the fly over him with a sideways cast. He made your fly move then, but he was after something else. He must have seen it, so pick it off the water and put on a Wickham. If he does fasten, mind those willow roots. That's his holt. A nice, light cast, and well over him. Look out! Habet! He is a plugger. Hard luck! He has broken you in the willow roots. Though he never took a degree in science, he knows all about fulcrum, power and weight. Wily old beggar! Take your hat off to him. Honours are equal. You put the "comether" on him, but he did not lose his head. He will not be up again to-night, but he will not move his "pitch," and will be laying you the odds to-morrow evening.

Put on another red quill, and watch the next fifty yards of water. In the clear, still, westering light, you can see everything that goes on.—No, that "plop" was not a fish, but a water rat. Here he comes down-stream towards us. Keep still! he has winded something, and is casting about like a foxhound for the scent. It is that turnip that has run aground on that flat weed bed. Let him have a taste of it, but we cannot wait for him to finish his meal, as there is a trout rising under the far bank. Plop! He will come back to the feast after we are gone.

You see that bit of bare bank about a cricket pitch up-stream? A foot below. There he is. The wind is just right for the cast, and all your difficulty will be the approach. Get down on your tummy for the next ten yards and then take stock of the situation. Lay it to your heart that it is the pursuit and not the kill that

gives the rapture of the chase, but I should avoid that bed of nettles if you possibly can. Go ahead. He is up again.

It strikes me you do not want much more teaching. You approached well, you got your fly over him first cast, you "tightened" like a veteran, and the only mistake you made was that you tried to net him before he was ready to come in. However, you got 90 out of a possible 100 marks, and if you have got a flask on you, we will "wet his head," as they say of babies.

Now I do not want to give you a swelled head, but you have got the fingers, wrist and eye for the dry fly. It is like billiards. Some fellows can do losing and winning hazards, and cannons, but they have no idea of a "jenny." It is just that delicate touch and judgment of spin, drag and pace that puts the man who can play a "jenny" *properly* in a different category. So in dry fly fishing. You have got to control a fly, so that you know exactly what it is doing fifteen yards behind you, and especially what it is going to do fifteen yards in front of you. You also have not got to give the show away by going into action with the waving of flags and the beating of drums, so to speak. Quiet, invisible and almost motionless, you must play your game. Any "flash" on your part will be fatal to success. Put your fly over every likely place, and do not wait till you see a fish actually rising. Life is too short to cast only over trout which are "standing"—a curious expression, the derivation of which, though technical and correct, I do not know. Now I must be off, so good luck to you. Try the Sedge when it gets too dark to see the duns, and let me know to-morrow how you got on.

JULY.

TROUT FISHING.

MINNOW AND WORM.

I am not going to champion either minnow or worm fishing for trout, and will only say that both methods are useful, if you want to kill fish under certain conditions. When the water is dead low in July or August, you can get a basket with the worm, fishing up-stream with a 15 foot rod. The tackle is Pennell, which consists of two small hooks, about one inch apart, on each of which the worm is lightly impaled. Immediately after this operation drop the bait in the water at your feet. The slight shock seems to stop excessive wriggling and prevents the worm from tying itself into a knot on the tackle. A single shot a foot or so above the hooks will be enough to steady the bait. The cast is ordinary gut, tapered for choice, and about 6ft. in length. Only the shallow "stickles" and the streams need be fished, and it is from the former that you will get most of your fish. The "stickles" look too shallow to hold a fish of half-a-pound, but their appearance is deceptive. You ought to do some "creeping and crawling," though not twenty-four hours of it, which constituted, according to the keeper, a day's fishing in the case of Christopher North (or was it Stewart?—I forget). Keep low, and throw up-stream with a sideways or overhead cast. The latter is rather hard on the worm. If the line stops, strike at once, with the rod parallel to the water. If it is only a stone or weed, inspect your bait, as the slightest suspicion of weed on the hooks

is not attractive to trout. If it is a fish, you can manage him in the usual manner, and will probably be able to net him as he comes past first time.

Another very interesting chance of worm fishing is when you know there are trout in a small, and perhaps overgrown, brook. The fly is almost impossible, unless you "bob," and you cannot bring your fly to the notice of many fish which are lying under the bank. Use a short, stiff rod—your pike rod will be just the thing—with Pennell tackle, and take your long-handled net for choice. The latter will be useful, if you get hung up or fast under water. Many small brooks are breeding grounds for trout, and some fish, finding there is not so much competition in the brooks, remain behind after spawning, and attain a fair size. Be careful not to walk heavily on the bank, under which may be a trout. Though they cannot hear in the ordinary sense, their swimming bladder is connected to their brain, and through this organ vibration is felt and danger sensed.

If you take my advice you will never fish the flood worm under any circumstances. There is no element of sport in the business, and the odds are too heavy against the fish.

There are several ways of fishing the minnow, according to the river conditions. The most favourable time is when the water is clearing, after a medium flood, and is amber coloured, something like beer. It is usually compared to porter, but it is only as regards the froth of this liquid that the comparison could reasonably be made. At this time, you can use the artificial if you like, and can "run" a fish at almost every draw. You will not hook every fish you touch, as they do

not seem to mean to take it in their mouths, but rather as if they were playing a sort of "charging" game, equivalent to our football. Little and big trout all "have a go." A trout that takes a minnow fairly in his mouth gives very little sport and is soon "drowned," owing to the fact that he cannot close his mouth, and the water goes through his gills the wrong way.

By far the most sporting method is the clear-water minnow. I notice in Hardy's catalogue, of 1921, it states that "The art of casting a minnow across and up-stream is *not* generally known," while in the 1923 Edition the word *now* is substituted for *not*. I do not agree. I remember in 1911—the hottest summer I ever remember—fishing the Eden and doing well for a week with the up-stream minnow in a very low water. Then the green slime appeared and I was undone, as at every cast the hooks were fouled by the beastly stuff. So we took to night-fishing from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. We breakfasted at 8 a.m. and went to bed soon afterwards. We got up for tea about 6, and one day, coming into the coffee room, found a lady from Yorkshire, who asked us whether we had had any sport. We replied that no one could catch fish in such water. She then said—I cannot give her Yorkshire dialect—"Our Bill can catch 'em. We came down by the one o'clock train, and he'll be in for tea, and you'll see." We pitied the lady for her marital optimism, and the man for the grilling he was getting in the very hottest part of the afternoon. But the lady was right, as they usually are. Bill could catch 'em. A big meat plate was brought in with about twenty trout—three to the pound—and Bill came in quietly to have his tea. We were mean enough to think

about maggots, and even salmon roe. How had he got them? Natural minnow. He would shew us after tea. The performance was an eye-opener, and, except for the fact that he used the Illingworth reel, which was then barred in club waters, it was sportsman-like.

Selecting a long, flat length, with a depth of about three feet, and lined with bushes on both sides, he waded up the middle—it would be about forty yards wide—and flicked his bait with unerring accuracy near the bushes, and then apparently did nothing. It was only the movement of a finger on the reel that was taking place, but the bait was coming towards him like a torpedo guided by wireless. At least once in every three casts he had a fish or a "run." After a short time he came to the bank and accepted a cigar and, while he smoked it, we "drew" him for all we were worth. He only used fresh minnows. Salt, he contended, put the trout off, and formalin he would not hear of. His tackle was the Ariel, which I had always sworn by and used, but the triangles on his cast were sharp as needles and finer than any I had seen. By the way, you know Marryat's definition of a good book—"The temper of an angel, the penetration of a prophet, fine enough to be invisible, and strong enough to kill a bull in a ten-acre field." Bill had got this sort. On his cast he had as few knots as possible, as he said that every knot caused a bubble when the bait was moving through the water. But, of course, the real secret was the distance. Every trout took the bait at least ten yards from the angler. That is where you are done when fishing with an ordinary reel, and have to rely on your own skill in getting out the bait. The Silex reel

is a sort of distant relation of the Illingworth, in that it makes it easier to cast the bait, but is not so devilishly automatic, and is not barred where minnow fishing is allowed at all.

So much for Bill and his works. He did not see the error of his ways, and was a nice, quiet chap, at some Yorkshire mill. If he was as careful in detail in his work as in his play, he was a reliable workman and, in his infinite capacity for taking pains, a genius.

But you will take your wet-fly rod and ordinary reel and follow some of Bill's tips. Fresh minnows are more killing, but how do you catch minnows for bait? You will see shoals of them on the shallows, but they are unapproachable. I remember once taking off my coat literally to them and dashing in with a landing net filled with grass, on the shallows. Result—one landing net broken and one minnow without a head. The best way is to find them in fairly deep water and let down your Ariel tackle with its triangles adorned with bits of worm. Strike every time you see them at it, and you will foul hook enough for the day's fishing in a very short time. The Ariel flight consists of a small lead, through a hole in the head of which two strands of gut are passed and knotted above. One strand has one triangle at its free end and the second has two—one placed so as to come level with the first triangle mentioned, and the other about an inch below. Push the lead into the minnow's mouth, draw the gut through the lead till the side triangles are opposite the shoulder, and fix them one on each side. Now bend the tail and fix the free triangle in such a way that a slight curve is attained. There is a swivel about a

foot above the knot that joins the gut lengths on which the triangles are whipped, and another where the cast joins the reel line. If you tie a piece of silk or fine wire round the shoulders of the bait, including the two side-by-side triangles, it will save you trouble in the long run, as they are liable to come unstuck.

Now you are, in imagination, ready to make your cast. Wade in and throw across the stream, with an underhand cast, a line the length of your rod, letting the bait go from your left hand. Immediately it touches the water, draw the line with the left hand and follow on the draw by bringing the rod across as well. The actions must be made alternately. The plop of the bait attracts, rather than scares, a trout, and you may hook a fish in the first yard. But it is more exciting when you see your bait followed by a dark shadow, and more exciting still when you see the fish with wide open mouth attempt to seize the bait. But, unfortunately, that is very often the psychological moment when he sees you, and the deal is "off." You need not bother about that particular fish that day. He will not come again.

If there is a ripple on the stream, your image will be enormously distorted, and you will have a better chance of success, so keep the bait spinning till close to you and you can keep spinning no longer. As you lift it out of the water you will sometimes see a fish break away from the very tail of your minnow.

Now try to spin dead up-stream, and draw down. Try in deepish water at first, and you will at last find yourself spinning in quick, shallow water, which is the most deadly method, if you can keep out of sight. Keep

low and with a background of trees, if possible, or behind a boulder. If you kneel in shallow water you will about halve your height and can manipulate the rod in that position equally well as if erect or crouching.

If you can get no natural minnows, a small, painted quill minnow is a useful bait and will stand more rough usage than the natural. You can throw it overhand like a fly for a considerable distance, and if it is not heavy enough put a shot or two into its body and fill up the hole with wax.

I once had a most extraordinary day when fishing the Mayfly. It was raining "cats and dogs," and it was no good trying to keep the fly dry. So I fished a big, hackled fly, wet, but could do nothing until I began to jerk it down-stream, exactly as if I was fishing the minnow. The method, though unorthodox, to say the least of it, was entirely successful, and nineteen trout were in my basket by the end of the day. It happened on a Club Water on the Arrow in Herefordshire, and I have often wondered whether, if I had met the Secretary or any of the members, I should have given them a demonstration of the method!

Another way of fishing the minnow that I shall describe was once practised on a Scottish Loch. Two boats were out, one with fly for salmon, and another with a large minnow and extra strong tackle. When the fly-fisher hooked a salmon, the other boat deliberately rowed across the fly-fishers line, fouled the salmon at its head by manœuvring, and calmly landed and claimed the fish. The case was actually taken into Court, and the verdict was inevitable, but the incident only

shews that all fishermen are not sportsmen or even honest. It sounds rather like a German plan.

The last method is that of the drop minnow. I have never fished it, but I can believe it useful in getting cannibal trout out of deep water. By the way, we never made a post mortem examination of any fish. It sometimes helps you, and is always interesting to examine the contents of the stomach in an old white crock, containing a little water.

This has been rather a boring sort of lecture, but have another—whisky, I mean, not lecture—and you will feel better. I do not advise minnow or worm when there is a chance of fly taking. I had my eye badly wiped years ago, when, to all appearances, there was a good minnow water. I had been fishing minnow all morning with little result, when I became aware of a school cap—red stripes on a black ground, I remember—just showing above the bank. A small boy was the owner of the cap. The young beggar had half-filled a creel with beautiful trout all on the fly!

AUGUST.

WOODPIGEON SHOOTING.

Get your gun, my son, and a couple of milking stools—handier in a "hide" and more comfortable than any shooting stick. Put on your oldest hat and bring an old coat to make a dummy, if necessary. I've got cartridges for both of us. Come along, it's nearly two o'clock, and we shall be just in time for the afternoon feed on that wheat of Farmer Robinson, that they cut yesterday. It's

likely to be quiet, and, if they happen to be working in an adjacent field, all the better for us.

Now, as this is your first day after pigeons, I'll give you a few tips as we go along. Don't imagine you can always go and kill woodpigeons—the wind, the weather, the feed, field work, and even children getting blackberries, will make all the difference.

The chief points to bear in mind are three—keep still, keep still, and keep still. The eye of a hawk is proverbial, but the eye of a woodpigeon is uncanny. Talk about "camouflage"—paint yourself yellow or green, and make a noise like a grain of wheat or an acorn, according to the season, but it will be of no avail if you do not keep still. Turn your eyes—almost keeping the lids over the whites of them—but not your head, directly you see a bird, for he will see you quick enough, unless you "freeze." If we do happen to disturb a lot of birds on the feed, don't shoot, but assume the easy air of a farm hand. They will come back, most of them. Now, here we are, so we'll take stock of our "pitch." Remember, pigeons always come in up wind, and unless there are other birds feeding, or you have got decoys down, usually make for the nearest tree. There's a big elm which looks likely but, from our point of view, I prefer those two oaks, so we'll blank the elm with a "dummy." Hang your old coat up, and put a stick to look like a gun. Now come round the fence to the oaks. There's a good, wide and fairly deep ditch, overgrown with nettles and hemlock. Be careful not to tread the outside growth down, or the birds will notice it. Get down into the ditch and we'll make ourselves comfortable. Trim away as little as possible, and bend a hazel

bough at your side down, and tie it to a nettle stem. Don't break the bough, or it will wither and become conspicuous in a day or two if you want to use the hide again.

Now we shall have to wait, as any birds that may happen to be in neighbouring trees have spotted us for a certainty, and will move off—there go three out of that big oak in the next meadow. I always think this is the best way of getting sport with wood-pigeons. If you only go for them when they are coming in to roost, it's only an hour or so, though, if you get the right place, your gun may get hot.

The most difficult shooting you will occasionally get in a real, big woodland—not too thick—when the birds are in after acorns. You want several guns, according to the acreage of the woodland, in order to keep the pigeons on the wing. They won't leave the wood, especially if it is a windy day, and you can easily guess you will get some very pretty shooting. It is not easy to mark your bird down at any distance, and you had better go straight to the place and retrieve each one.

If you want pigeon pie very badly, and there is snow on the ground, there is another way. A farmer told me with glee how he had killed sixteen birds with two barrels. You simply scrape a long, bare patch in the snow and bait with wheat or peas. By the way, a pea crop is the best feed of all. If I had a rough shoot, I would purposely grow a strip of peas and only just skim the crop. If I was allowed only one bird to shoot all my life, I would choose a pigeon. You can shoot him from August to April, or all the year round, if he is a pest. He gives you shooting at every angle and pace, and is a beggar to stalk.

Look out; there's a small lot coming dead ahead, rather high, but they look like coming to this feed. They may go over us and turn back. Keep still now on your life. Don't look up; they're over. Now in a few seconds they'll be round again. Let them come as close as you can judge they will, and take the nearest bird. Well done, you got yours and I got mine, and a third has gone in the elm hard hit and will drop. There he is, he fell almost on the dummy.

Now I'll light a pipe (I'll not shew much smoke, as they see it a long way off), and you go and collect the birds that are down and I'll shew you how to set them as decoys. Be careful not to ruffle the feathers or pull the tail out.

Put them about thirty yards out from our hide, one on the attock and two on the ground. Heads up-wind and raised slightly, by pushing a piece of growing stubble into the beak, or better still by pushing a pointed stick down the throat, and through its breast into the ground. Don't leave any loose feathers about.

Now let us go back again. Mind the outside growth.

I remember once shooting over live decoys. Woodpigeons reared from the nest. They belonged to a Sergeant in the Berkshires, who had wonderful stories of huge bags. They certainly were useful, as they told you by raising their heads exactly when wild pigeons were near.

Did you see anything? I thought you moved your gun. Only a gnat. Yes, when they are a foot or two away they certainly do look like pigeons on the horizon. I don't like a man who shoots at a bumble bee after lunch, when walking up partridge, even

though he does talk about perspective. The artistic temperament is dangerous sometimes.

There's a pigeon come into the oak on your right. I can see him plainly, but I won't shoot him, as he will act as a decoy as long as he is there, and may, if we keep still, go down to the decoys. No, he's off; probably heard me talking.

There are three more coming in on my left. They are dropping very fast and will probably pitch on the decoys. Well done again, you got your bird. I didn't shoot. Go and set him up with the rest. Leave your gun, and be as quick as you can, but set your bird up naturally. Look out, there's a big lot—twenty or thirty—coming over us. They don't look like coming down; they are flying very fast and seem to have business elsewhere. Peep through the back of the hedge and report. Gone into the high elms in the Park. They may come out again, but have probably fed, and been disturbed at the end of the feed.

They don't keep coming as fast as you like. I know, but it doesn't pay to slack in your lookout. Everything that flies over a horizon of twenty miles you ought to see from here. There's a hawk coming into your oak. No, don't shoot him. There's an old heron flapping down the brook. It must be getting late—five o'clock. Only an hour more, and only four pigeons, so far.

Listen; there are birds coming over us from behind. Two to my side and three to yours. They'll turn to the decoys. Good boy. You killed two with your first barrel, and I got the third of your lot. My two birds didn't come along. Nip out again and bring them in. We don't want any more decoys.

There's one flown into the big elm. He's out again, frightened by the dummy, and coming hell-for-leather over us. Take him as he goes over you. Hold well forward. He's carried over the field behind us, but seemed to be slanting down the last thing I saw of him through the hedge.

It's just as well to try and keep a pigeon in view for as long as possible, after you have shot him, as they carry a lot of shot for a hundred yards or more, and then drop dead. Ah; here are two men coming to set up any attacks that have got on the ground, so we shall not do anything more here to-night.

Take your cartridges out and bring the stools. I've got the bag. Seven birds, so far. We ought to make up to double figures before night. We'll go and wait near those fir coverts in the Park, and keep a hundred yards apart.

Take them as they come in, as you won't see much of them after they have let. If you see a real big lot coming, wait till the first birds are in and take the last odd two or three. Then reload quickly, and you may get two more barrels as they fly out helter skelter.

Well, how did you get on? Only one, and fired twelve cartridges. You'll often do it again, so don't worry. I got seven with twelve cartridges, but I own it was my evening out. We'll leave a few at the Vicarage as we go past, in exchange for that brace of grayling the Vicar left last night at the house. He doesn't shoot, but he can teach us a thing or two in the fishing line.

SEPTEMBER.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.

A still September day, with the smoke from the chimneys going straight up, and the sun not too hot, makes, or ought to make, a man at peace with all the world and inclined to make his "wayside communion" with his Creator. Each hedgerow is a riot of glorious colour and almost every field shews evidence of the harvest which is being gathered. You must have no business on that day. "Bulls and bears" are mythical creatures, clients are non-existent. Offices, consulting rooms, warehouses and suchlike abominations are only the figment of an evil dream, and if you can find your first covey without getting into one of those horrible motors, so much the better, but you can appreciate a ride in one at the end of the day—let us say for the sake of the dogs.

My old dad used to protest that there was no dog in the world worth more than half-a-crown. There are times when I really begin to think he appreciated them above their value. You take three dogs out, and at one o'clock the bag is one partridge. At lunch two dogs quarrel and fight and the third beast is found to have eaten the bag, what time the spectators have had their attention drawn to the "scrap."

One slow, old spaniel and a retriever on a slip are all we shall take out. I wish we had a pointer, but they are such a nuisance in the off season, and get fat and mangy, unless properly exercised. A cheap and efficient slip is illustrated in "Hawker on Shooting," and

consists of a strong cord, about six feet long. At one end is a loop, and the other end is tied to the middle of a wooden stick, about six inches long. The looped end is passed through the collar and brought back to be slipped over the wooden handle. It is simple, cheap and practical.

The raising of birds on a big shoot does not concern you and me and the likes of us, but the method of Lord Euston is interesting and, where foxes are preserved, necessary. It is impossible to rear partridges like pheasants, but the Euston system is almost American in its cuteness. Your keepers mark down, by means of dogs (some of which are specially good at the job), as many sitting wild birds as they can, and take the eggs away, substituting "dummies." The eggs are placed under hens and, on the point of hatching, are returned to the partridge. This method avoids the danger of the eggs being taken by vermin—a wholesale risk which is not the same when the chicks are hatched.

The stock of birds on a small manor is dependent on a good many things. Above all, it depends on the amount of vermin. The sitting hen is said to lose her scent during the time of incubation but, allowing this to be a thoughtful provision of nature, "red in tooth and claw," what is to prevent a fox, dog, cat, stoat, hedgehog, or other four-footed poacher from blundering on to her, perhaps in pursuit of a rabbit in a fence? I can only hope she does not start at sounds, like a woman alone in a house, or she will have her nerves frayed to fiddlestrings before the end of the three weeks. And then her real troubles begin. Some of us know what it is to take five children to the seaside on a wet day, but

that must be easy compared with the task of conveying a dozen delicate chicks through wet mowing grass to the protection of the nearest hedge. They are wonderful little beggars for taking cover, and, if you surprise a brood that cannot fly, the old birds will clear off—the hen usually dragging an apparently broken wing to lure you away from the family—while the chicks will scatter and “go down” till the hen returns. Then if you can keep out of sight you will see a beautiful moving picture. The mother comes quietly, but anxiously, back, and not a movement is detected in the grass, till she gives a curious low call, and immediately little black heads are up, and, on the call being repeated, the chicks will run towards the hen, who will usually draw them away from that particular place at once. When the brood is old enough to lay claim to the proud title of covey, the diary is somewhat as follows:—As soon as it is light they draw off, sometimes on the wing, from the “eddish” where they have been “jugging” all night. Straight to the feed on the stubble, where each bird “fends” for itself. When their wants have been satisfied, they will go to the nearest hedge, where the morning toilet in the dust bath will be performed. A second breakfast or “baggin” will consist of insects and ant eggs, of which they are very fond. If the sun gets very hot, they will go to the roots on the other side of the fence, where the dewdrops on the big leaves provide a welcome quencher. In the early afternoon, you may find them on the grass fields—a sort of Park parade, perhaps for exercise, though they never meet their kind till late in the season, when two or three coveys will sometimes “pack” together. About three o’clock they will be thinking of the stubbles again, and

feed until dusk, when they will be off to bed on the mown grass or meadow. In a ring they sleep, each bird with its head pointing outwards, with the old cock on duty as sentinel and orderly officer for the night. Safe they are then till the next day, except for the silken net of the poacher, trailed over the well-marked spot and "clapped" on the rise of the faithful old father, who only gets this one experience, and so cannot lead his family out of harin's way by running, as they could so easily do

Now, I do want to advise you about the way to carry a gun. One of my dearest friends—no longer with us, to our real sorrow—was often my shooting host. He used to say that he had never known partridges or pheasants cost more than a sovereign in the market, and had never known a man who was worth less. He preferred to see a man, after putting fresh cartridges in his gun, bring the stock up to the barrels, rather than the barrels to the stock. The safest way to carry a gun, in all circumstances, is over the right shoulder, with the trigger-guard uppermost. Even when walking up birds, which you know are in the field you are traversing, adopt this plan. You will have plenty of time to get your two barrels off, and will neither have to shoot too close nor too far. Avoid both, especially the "too far." Nothing marks the "bounder" more than this, especially when he remarks that "one pellet *might* have gone through the head." You cannot make a sportsman out of this kind of fool.

For a pleasant, easy day, in my opinion, three guns are enough with two beaters—one between each gun. I propose that you and I and the Major, with Diggory and Ben, form

the party. The Major is slow—a very good fault—but he will mark our birds, as well as his own. He may also bring some of that orange gin which his housekeeper makes! Ben will lead our wild retriever—he usually carries a dog biscuit in his pocket—and Dig-gory will carry the game bag. I will send the lunch to Robinson's farm. We shall not be far off that place all day, as he has got four fields of wheat on his holding, and always does his best to shew us sport. We shall not bother about beginning on the boundaries. Jealousy of this sort is unsportsmanlike, and also often defeats its own ends. You may put birds off your beat, which otherwise would have come on to your land in the afternoon, if you had not disturbed them.

When birds fall, either your own or the victims of the other guns, mark them by taking a line on some conspicuous object in the surrounding fence, and also by a particular patch in the crop into which they fall. If the rest of the covey have got up and gone, stand still while the spaniel works. If the retriever is slipped and the birds not yet gathered, you will be able to give useful information from your point of vantage as to the spot upon which to concentrate. A handkerchief can then be laid where you direct and the search made closely round this mark. Don't walk about, as you will foil any scent for the dogs, so light a pipe and be an interested spectator of proceedings, which are not always successful.

Sometimes a man will look over a gate and announce the presence of a covey. If he gets up on the gate for better observation and reiterates his statement, saying that he can still see them, you can safely bet him half-a-crown

that they are not there! Birds see you as soon as you see them and immediately "clap" and become invisible in stubble or even short grass, so that our friend has probably been misled by clods of earth, simulating the presence of a covey.

If it happens that we find a real wild lot in the afternoon—a covey that gets up from a grass field and drops in another—we shall try and drive them over us. Ben and Diggory may have a five mile walk, but they will be rewarded with as much beer as they can drink—no, not quite that, but an extra pint will be ample reward, because, after all, it is the beaters who have the sport in a drive, whether on a large or small scale. Ben knows exactly the hedge where we shall line up, and, if they go wide the first and second time, we can admire the scenery, smoke a good deal of tobacco, and probably get a magpie or two and a shot at pigeon, which we shall not get into the bag. Our birds have got to last us a good many days, and there are not so many of them that we can afford to kill more than two or three brace a day. Besides, it is the chase and not the capture, and don't you forget it.

I know there are men who would not give the Duke of Wellington's "tuppenny dam"—an Indian coin, I believe—for a day on which the bag is not heavy. I have had many good, blank days, as far as the bag was concerned, both fishing and shooting, and I hope I may have many more. There are always mushrooms or crowquills. There is always lunch. What does a man want more? "All of fishing is not fish," as Izaak Walton used to say. There is too much "getting" in this life, and we are pulled up, and rightly so,

every now and then, by the parson, who has his eye not only on the collection, when he suggests that "giving" is part of the scheme. Unless you have a contract to supply birds to the local poulterer, it adds to the sport if a big covey has the best of the deal, and, after a long tramp, when cartridges are out and pipes lit, gets up under your feet in the last gateway on your way home.

Keep as quiet as you can, especially when birds are known to be in front of you. You will see a fox or two, if we get into roots, but Ben and Diggory will do enough "hollering" for the party, and you will see a nice covey going out at the end of the field out of shot! But that is all in the game. If you are walking after single birds that have been separated from the main covey and marked fairly accurately, go right up to the fence near which they have dropped and be ready for a snap shot out of the fence. The "silliest" shooting you will get is at birds that have "squandered" in clover, but you don't often get it. Modern birds are wiser than those of twenty years ago.

My final advice to you is to leave the smoking room when the last "right and left" has been a partridge and a trout. Keep your "allowance" down to a minimum, and take a mild liver pill, on retiring.

It is on record that "W.G." used to resort to the latter, and probably exercised restraint as to the former, to "get his eye in," as it usually was. I believe he was a good game shot. Most big men seem to get more out of a gun than a man who is lightly made. The man who taught me what I know about shooting was a local giant. When I wanted to

make him a present for his kindness, what do you think he chose? The "Works of Josephus"! What Josephus had to tell him, I know not, but it was not connected with shooting.

Bring. twenty-five cartridges, "sixes," and the same number of "threes," as we may try for pigeon, if there are any about. The partridge will always be on the ground, but pigeon, like woodcock, have to be gone for when they are "in." Tuesday, then; ten o'clock sharp, here. We will keep "gentlemen's hours," 10 to 4, and, as far as possible, try not to shoot them on the morning or afternoon feed. It is not fair. How would you like it yourself? On Saturday, you will come to dinner, and we will have a bird each, plain roast, and a flask of Chianti, a fruit salad and some cream cheese, and with the coffee a cigar, which I cannot afford to buy, but am not too proud to accept as a present from friends who know my weakness.



OCTOBER.



THE SPORTSMAN'S LIBRARY.



Come in, old man, glad to see you. What is it like outside? Raining like mad and a gale blowing from the north-west. Just the night for an inspection of books, and the billiard table makes a good parade ground. Leave the cover on, as books always hold a certain amount of dust. I do not keep them in "parade gloss" in glass-fronted shelves, but rather in "field polish." There is a difference

of opinion as to the kind of bookcase to use, but so long as there is free ventilation behind and the books are not too tightly packed, you will not find that damp troubles them much. Every now and then take a book out and leave it lying on the top of the others for a day or two. If a shelf persists in shewing dampness, a few empty cigar boxes pierced with small holes on every side can be inserted at intervals between the books and can be filled with loose papers, letters, etc., and furnished with a bar indicating the contents.

The top shelf should not be higher than your hand can easily reach, and the space above can be suitably filled by your old college groups, sporting prints, that case with the 16lb pike, and a display of any old sporting pieces of gunmetal that you so dearly prize. What my wife really thinks of all the old junk that I have collected, like a jackdaw, for the last thirty years, she does not express in words. She is a very sensible person. What my executors will say about the stuff I shall not hear, but, probably, a short time after the funeral, a rag and bone merchant's cart will slip away from my back premises with a varied assortment of old scrap, unless, or indeed even if, I leave it all to them in recognition of their valuable services! Your guns, rods, etc., should be kept in the same room as your other treasures, in a glass-fronted case. It makes an appropriate piece of furniture, and enables you to get your gun out in the off-season and bring it up to a mark. It will also remind you in the winter that your trout rods will be all the better for an overhaul, and not left too late. Keep your cartridges, with the cigars, over the kitchen mantelpiece. They will both go off better if you do this.

Now about the books. You young fellows don't read anything nowadays, except the newspapers and magazines and some rubbishy novels about the eternal triangle. I own, you cannot learn much about sport from books till you have nearly finished your education, though some men have a happy knack of putting you into their skins while they are writing of how things are done. Of poetry you know nothing, and care less. You lose a lot, but I know it is no good jawing about it. A man either has it or not, and I sincerely pity the man who has not got the sense to appreciate poetry. Well, I suppose I am an old fool, but I cry over things that are written by men who are not laureates. Kipling is the man who grips me, but he does not let himself go in the domain of sport. He gave us his best in the "Islanders," shewing the proportion of importance of sport. If that poem had been read every Sunday in the churches and chapels of our Empire from the day of publication, with the Recessional as an anthem, there would have been no Great War. Kipling, with Lord Roberts and some others, saw the vision and warned the nation, but we "would neither look nor heed." Talking of churches, there are the deeply scored sharpening notches made by Cheshire bowmen in the South Porch of our old Parish Church. Every Sunday there was archery practice, probably on that piece of ground near the church, known as Bowcroft. England then had no reason to "fawn on the Younger Nations for the men who could shoot and ride." Yes, you are quite right, it was that piece with the reference to "flannelled fools" and "muddied oafs." That line was the only one that stuck in your silly heads, and it did not even make you think.

Steady on? All right, I beg your pardon. I'll get off my hobby and change horses. You can read Kipling's "Feet of the Young Men" in the "Five Nations," as well as the "Islanders." The swinging rhythm and compelling call of this hunting song make even an old man's heart "troubled for the whisper of the Trues."

"Who hath smelt wood-smoke at twilight?

Who hath heard the bi ch-log burning?

Who is quick to read the noises of the night?

Let him follow with the others, for the Young Men's feet are turning

To the camps of proved desire and known delight!"

"Do you know the long day's patience, belly-down on frozen drift,

While the head of heads is feeding out of range?"

" . . . Quick! ah, heave the camp-kit over!

For the Red Gods make their medicine again!"

And yet they say he is no sportsman himself! Perhaps he will not stop the real high birds, but he will tell you more about the day's sport than you noticed and, expressly against orders, will be inclined to stop behind to pick up after the drive (he saw that hen pheasant carry on and suddenly crumple up, half-a-mile behind the guns), rather than go on to the next stand. Very bad form, and he probably will not be asked again! He ought to have left it to the keepers, of course. It's their job.

Of sporting poets in general, you must read Whyte-Melville, Lindsay Gordon, Egerton Warburton and Masfield.

Some of Whyte-Melville's "Songs and Verses" are tinged with regrets of what might have been, but the Hunting Songs are all stirring poems, which echo to the ring of stirrup and bit. You have read some of them? Well, read them all, also his novels. You will get a better idea of hunting from his works than any others I could mention.

Egerton Warburton is our Cheshire Hunting poet, and had a particularly happy hunting ground for his bitch pack of Muses to go over. Many a "Quæsitum" must have been quaffed in his honour at the Swan at Tarporley in the old days. I know you have read most of his "rigmarole," as he himself calls it in "Farmer Dobbin."

"Reynard the Fox" is an epic by John Masefield, which cannot be left out of any list of sporting poems. A blue pencil, carefully handled, would not have spoilt the pleasure of the reader, but it is all so natural that one must not cavil at the language he puts into the lips of his actors.

You will see that I have put a label, "Sport and Natural History" over the shelves that hold my sporting library. The two subjects must be taken together. In our schooldays, birds' eggs played too great a part in our zoology. They were solid, more or less, except when we sat on them, they were the "spolia opima" of many a walk and climb, and could be swapped on a curious system of exchange, in which the commercial abilities and bargaining capacities of the young merchants cast the shadows of coming events in the future days. I was always "done," and only once got a bit of my own back, when I palmed off an old, rough-shelled hen's egg as that of a dodo! I

cannot remember what I got for it, but it seemed to put me more on a level with the other members of the Exchange.

There was no "Field Club" at Rossall, and although born and bred in the country, I, for one, knew little about birds. Their plumage, flight and song were almost unknown. How many men can spot a woodpecker by its flight, or tell you the difference in plumage between a kestrel and a sparrow hawk? Take a naturalist out fishing, and he will see more than you do. It is true, his creel may contain more specimens of other things than trout, but he will allow that he has "powlert up and down a bit and had a rattling day." His rod top was broken early on, and his new landing net a ruin, but he has got a "blue" or something in the butterfly line that he prizes more than you do your pounder. And you envy him his lore and love of "all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small," as perhaps he envies you that long, accurate cast that was the undoing of your big trout.

Here is Gilbert White's "Natural History of Selborne" (1789). In spite of the date, it is still a reliable book of reference. It consists of letters to Thomas Pennant and the Hon. Daines Barrington, and among other chapters on Birds, Insects, Weather, etc., there is a Naturalist's Calendar. White was an all-round naturalist, with the literary style of Kingsley, and wrote during a period of more than forty years about the same locality. Being of "unambitious temper," he spent the greater part of his life in the study of nature, and probably echoed the hope of his correspondent, Thomas Pennant, that his "soul does not disappoint the end of its Creator."

I have not got Coward's "Birds of the British Isles," but I have read it with great interest. It is from the pen of a real observer, who has known the "long day's patience," and who can put down the result on paper in a reliable and interesting manner. The illustrations are from various sources. The photographs of birds and nest in situ are perfect.

In "British Birds in their Haunts" there are some dainty coloured plates, by William Foster. Compare them with Morris. They are both in the shelves, and I think you will allow that one is better than the other. Talking of Morris, you will find a first edition of his "British Butterflies," which I rescued the other day from a hamper in a shippoon. It was on its way to a bonfire. There you have real colour imitation, hand-painted, I fancy. You can recognise any of the beauties again in life, as they are not in the least like human portraits, painted by a fashionable artist.

There are a dozen volumes, including some of Richard Jefferies and a Son of the Marshes, which are pleasant reading. Here are the "Idstone Papers," reprinted from the "Field," of fifty years ago, which are written by a parson, I fancy, but none the worse for that. I would have liked to have heard him preach.

Now let us see what books on Hunting we can find. Here is Peter Beckford's "Thoughts on Hunting" (1781). A bit out of date? Yes, and what is more, the style is stilted and old-fashioned, but it must be regarded as a classic, and revered as such.

The Badminton volume on Hunting is authoritative with the names of the Duke of Beaufort and A. E. T. Watson as its sponsors.

The "Noble Science of Fox Hunting," by Delmé-Radcliffe, with many old coloured prints, is a delightful book, written evidently by a sportsman and a scholar. Vyner's "Notitia Venatica" I gave away some time ago. "Nimrod" I never read.

"Hunting," by J. Otho Paget, forms one of the volumes of the Haddon Hall Library, and is not only up-to-date, but written "in the light manner of those engaged in a smoking-room discussion," which, in my humble opinion, is the best way, from the reader's point of view, in treating of sport. Here are "Riding Recollections," by Whyte Melville, as a case in point, though he could write really good stuff in the form of novels and poetry.

In a lighter vein, Surtees, although he himself would lay no claim to excellence, has added considerably to "the gaiety of nations" by his well-known sporting novels. If we must have "a solemn service of music" while we read our Milton, we must ask for a roaring fire and hot brandy-and-water, with a fox's mask grinning at us from over the mantelpiece, while we read "Handley Cross" or "Sponge's Sporting Tour." There never was a better overdrawn character than Jorrocks.

James Pigg and Jawleyford are dead long ago, the Scattercashes are dead broke, and Gabriel Junks no longer prophesies rain by his screams. But you can conjure up the whole motley crowd, and even sympathise with our friend Soapey Sponge, who, I really believe, was a keen sportsman, and can picture Jorrocks vowing he would make the customer cry "Capevi." The illustrations by "Phiz" and

Leech are such as to make the story more readable, as they so exactly hit off the racy vulgarity of the characters.

A set of "Punch" is almost an essential part of the Sportsman's Library, especially the John Leech period with the adventures of Mr. Briggs, though Keane, Bowers, Corbould and Armour all contribute to portraying the humorous side of sport by their drawings.

Talking of drawings, you must have some of Caldecott's Hunting pictures, and, last, but not least, a few of Cecil Aldin's, though I am not sure that his sketch of the Cheshire Hounds is geographically correct.

"Bailey's Magazine" you will find from 1860, and very good, light reading they are. "Bailey's Hunting Directory" is a useful book of reference, and tells you there is a pack of hounds in the Isle of Wight, but none in the Isle of Man.

Hawker on "Shooting" is another example of a classic, but out of date. Here and there you get a tip worth acting upon, but the sport is so changed since Hawker's day that the book is almost useless for reference. The "Badminton" again gives us two volumes, "Field and Covert" and "Moor and Marsh," both stuffed full of good reading. The "Fur and Feather" series has, among others, a book on "The Partridge," which, in my opinion, cannot be improved upon. "The Grouse," of the same series, is worth reading, if only for its chapter on "The Scotch Mail," by A. J. Stuart-Wortley, who writes on "Shooting the Grouse."

Books on Fishing are more numerous than all the other books on Sport put together. They also command a price far above their intrinsic

value, as most of them are written before 1850. Everybody seems to have had a go at making such books, and the result is disappointing. Even "The Compleat Angler," which, with Beckford's and Hawker's treatises, is a classic, has too much banal and commonplace conversation, which becomes tedious. There is very little humour, and the information is not always reliable. The "Bibliotheca Piscatoria," a catalogue on Books on Angling, includes over 2,000 distinct works, many of which passed through several editions.

The editions of "The Compleat Angler," must, by now, amount to well over a hundred. The original edition dates from 1653, and is worth as much as you like to give for it. It rarely gets into the market, and the majority of copies are in America. My copy, you will see, is called the "Seventh Edition, very much amended and improved," date 1759.

I have never seen any copy of Dame Julyans Berner's "Boke of hawkyng and huntynge and fysshynge" (1496). There is a facsimile by Elliot Stock (1880), which should be interesting.

From 1850 to 1900 a lot of printed matter relating to fishing was let loose. In 1854 Badham wrote an interesting volume on "Prose Halaeutics," or Fish Tattle, and gathered in his casting net all sorts of queer creatures, from Ancient Fishing Tackle to Opsophagy, including also a few Chondropterygians and Pleuronects! The Life History of the Eel was then unknown, but he knows all about Eel pie.

Frank Buckland and Francis Francis discoursed on Fish Hatching, and Stewart and Cholmondeley Pennell were telling the angling fraternity how to catch fish. Later on, F. M. Halford was the authority on Fish Culture,

and David Foster, senior, and the evergreen Pennell told us over again how to do the trick. Then came Lord Grey and the Marquis of Granby and the Hon. A. E. Gathorne-Hardy, with H. T. Sheringham and John Bickerdyke to represent the Commons, but between the whole lot of them we are catching fewer fish every year!

You must get "Fishing in Eden," by William Nelson, and give it to me as a birthday present. I have fished Eden since 1891, and "he who drinks Nile water will surely return" holds good for the Westmorland stream; Lazonby, Temple Sowerby, Crackenthorpe (when we could get leave from Captain Machell), Appleby, Ormside, Blacksyke Wood (a beautiful bit of water), and Musgrave, where Paley wrote his "Evidences." And there are grayling now which are worth going for, I believe. Fancy going up in September for a mixed bag, with a day or two after partridge, or, failing these, pigeon. We'll go next year, hanged if we don't. It may be for the last time. Who knows? Nelson himself gave me an address, Bank End Farm, near Coupland Beck. Let me verify the reference by turning it up in my Fishing commonplace Book, a volume now running into three hundred pages, with records of "days that are no more." Sad? Not a bit of it. If you cannot grow old happily, you had better chuck it.

As Robert Blatchford says, "Time teaches unselfishness and humility, and these are treasures more desirable and lasting than fame or riches, power or applause." Well, where were we? Oh, yes, talking about books. Hang all books! Say "when."

NOVEMBER.

FOX HUNTING.

I was out earth-stopping the other night with old Dan. We foregathered at the Brook House Farm at half-past nine, and young Bate was good enough to come along with us and see that I did not fall into the brook. It was a nice night for the job, but the district, although it pays rates, was not well lighted or drained, and we did not meet a single policeman. Bate warned me of the bad places and I found most of them all right. It was strangely quiet. Not a twitter in the bushes, though, from frequent experience of magpie shooting at night, I know that most of them were full of various small birds which lodge there.

Through the gate on the south side and about twenty yards along the lower ride there are twin ash trees. Striking into the bushes for ten yards, we came to the main earth. The original earth is, to a great extent, artificial. It runs about twenty yards in length and has an opening at each end, one of which is permanently stopped. A third opening half-way is used only for terrier work, if necessary. Another entrance has been made by some fastidious fox, who perhaps also had an idea at the back of his wise head that it might come in useful in certain emergencies. Dan, however, had also "tumbled" to this idea, and he closed both holes with a big stone and threw on a few spadefuls of earth, to make all secure. There were no pad marks on the drawnout sand, to shew whether the family had gone out, but the probability was that they had done so, and

this was proved to be a correct surmise, as two cubs were killed next day. Dan had stopped the badger earths in a neighbouring pithole and several big rabbit holes that morning, and would have to visit the badger bank again, as Mr. Brock will scratch out somewhere, however firmly the stopping is done.

There are more badgers than ever in the country. Delamere Forest is "snye" with them, and you can back yourself to get half-a-dozen in a day's digging, if you have the right tackle and terriers. It is said that badger-drawing makes terriers too hard for foxes, but it is also true that a dog that will tackle a badger gets a lot of experience that is good for him, and will most likely do well at foxes and otters. The latter animal must be bolted, as you cannot "stop" him out. We had a look at a big burrow that Dan had filled in, and there was a single pad mark made by a fox, who doubtless told the agent of the property that night that he would not entertain the idea of taking the house, as he did not think it healthy.

Hang it all! There's the bell. I hope no one wants me to go out to-night. I must say that my patients are extremely considerate, and never call me out without good reason. Hurrah! it's only the Major, who is probably looking for his revenge at billiards, but he won't get it. Come in, Major, I recognised your sweet voice, and you are just the man we want for a talk on Fox Hunting. It's a long time—twenty-three years to be exact—since I threw a leg across a horse, but I remember, if you forget, the last run we had together. Hounds had met at Tattenhall-road on a beast of a morning in February. It was raining and blowing hard, and you had drawn Handley,

Huxley and Hoofield blank. You had chopped a fox in the Gowy Covert and come on to Cotton Gorse, now long cut down. Nearly all the field had gone home, and I nicked in about three o'clock on a little mare, who could creep where she could not jump, and we had, as you yourself admitted, the best hunt you ever took part in. I watched them draw the gorse from the old packhorse lane, on the high ground above the Hockenhull Platts, and saw "Charles Reynolds" shaking himself, after swimming the Gowy. Old Jack Jones and Goddard crossed at the ford, and the field went round by Stapleford Bridge. I always say there are too many coverts (and also far too many foxes) for a hunt in the Vale, but, as it turned out, we were on a "traveller" from Oulton, and the curious part of the run was the fact that he never touched a covert during the "subsequent proceedings." The Watleys was his first apparent point, but he ran under the wood and straight across for the Steeplechase Course, as if Willington was his objective. I remember old Sherwin standing on a gate and cheering us on, though he had his eye on a particular field of wheat which hounds had crossed. On the Steeplechase Course "Billy" and "Port," you know whom I mean, Major, had a slight misunderstanding. By a "fortuitous concurrence of atoms" they were both making for the same place in a fence and cannoned one against the other. They seemed to be talking Chinese or Spanish to each other over the next field, and I got my hair slightly singed, but by the time the Ash Wood was reached they had relapsed into ordinary English, something to this effect, "Nice gallop, wish the Vale was all like that." Ash Wood looked more like Willington than ever, and a wind up on Primrose Hill and the Forest, but he probably was headed and we

found ourselves at Portal, where he ran through the gardens and out for Eaton. Rotten country, but the roads were useful, and we arrived at Calveley with the pick of the Oulton country in front of us. Philo (I should like to know where that name originated), and Oulton Low he disdained, and his point was evidently Oulton, from which many a good fox had come. We ran him to the Hall and lost him, I am glad to say, in the neighbourhood of the stables. Jones held on to the keeper's cottage and the reed bed at the far end of the Pool, but there was nothing there, except the duck. A good fox and a good run. Not too fast, or I should not have been there to tell the tale. I remember we gave our horses meat and water at the Egerton Arms, and you were shouting for tea, which was not forthcoming, but you seemed to take to whisky and soda all right. We were eight miles from home, but there was nothing on the road, even at Jordan's corner, in those days to be afraid of, as there is now.

I remember on the way home you talked a lot of rot about Fox Hunting being non-existent in a few years, owing to the Government, Liberal I think. What about it now? You don't know. No, nor anybody else. The sale of big estates will make a difference, but there is something about Fox Hunting which will take a lot of putting down. I sometimes think that a drag would be the best way of satisfying most of the field, with a printed card signifying that the draw would be at the Watleys, for instance, and lunch at one o'clock at the Carden Arms. But it is no good. It is not English. As you breed hounds for pace and nose, so you must breed and educate men for initiative and action, even if they only have to serve in the Tank

Corps. But don't breed either too close, as it reduces brain power. Get "the bitch from the Belvoir, the dog from the Quorn," as Whyte-Melville says, in praise of Bachelor, the King of the Kennel.

The sale of big estates is bound to make a difference to hunting. It is not every man who buys his farm that likes to see hounds across his land. If he gets a quid pro quo, in the shape of a good price for his straw, hay or oats, and an order for a turkey or a goose for his wife, he will be more likely to welcome the Hunt.

There ought to be a system of barter between the Hunt and the farmers, which would be free of the middleman. It is commission and the evils arising from that system that take the gilt off the gingerbread, and the two parties who are directly interested seldom get together by an introduction of any kind. Farmers should be able to say what forage they could supply, and customers to state their requirements. It could be managed from a central office, and if you got the right man to do it, it would go a long way towards that *Entente Cordiale* which is so necessary for sport of all kinds. Of course, I do not overlook the fact that hunting causes a lot of money to change hands in the district, but the hands are not always those of the deserving class. It used to be said that a pack of hounds hunting, say, four days a week, cost £1,000 for the year's expenses. I expect it is double that now.

Sent I never laid any claim to. There was always a lot of daylight between me and the saddle. Major Conne, author of "Hints on Horses," puts it this way: "A good rider does not ride more than his own weight. He

sits down close to the saddle, and his thighs practically become part of the horse. He sways his body from the loins, conforming to the movements of the horse, so as to keep the centre of gravity of man and horse combined in the most suitable place, *e.g.*, in rising at a fence he leans slightly forward. The extra weight forward gives momentum. The relief of weight behind gives full opportunity to the propelling force of the hind quarters. Whereas in descending to the ground he leans his body back, thereby allowing the fore-hand to alight without impediment." Mark you, this is his description of a good rider, but I am inclined to think that, out of a showyard, most men lean back in rising at a fence, and that in descending, much as they would like to lean back, they find themselves more over their horse's fore-hand than Bucephalus likes, especially if there is anything like a drop. The modern jockey seat is the ugliest picture that can be presented of a rider and a horse, but, as Tod Sloan proved, it is the way to get a horse first past the post. Stirrup-leathers should be just long enough for a normal man to clear his horse's withers when he stands up in them. If he is short-legged, he can take them up a couple of holes.

"Some people," says Whyte-Melville, "tell you they ride by 'balance,' others by 'grip.' I think a man might as well say he played the fiddle by 'finger' or by ear." The best way to get a "seat" is to ride without stirrups on every suitable occasion. In this way both balance and grip are achieved. Seat you can acquire, but hands are, like poets, born and not made. They are the weakest points of most riders' armour. Nearly every man does more harm than good with the reins. No

horse ever puts his nose in front of his fore-legs when extended or in the act of jumping. Verb sap! Those experts who boast that they "fairly lifted him over" should be invited to sit in a bucket and lift themselves by the handle. Sit still and do nothing is the best motto, and keep your hands down. The right man *may* help a horse to take off at the right place, but it is almost as risky as choosing a wife for another man.

Now, Major, what have you got to say about scent? Nothing definite? You are a wise man, and evidently a relation of an old doctor I knew, who would not go beyond the diagnosis of a seizure, an inflammation or a decline. He was usually right.

A lot of prophecy has gone wrong as to a good scenting day, but I think you will agree that the first essential is moisture and a low, but not falling, barometer. The former tends to hold the pad scent, and the latter that "breast high" scent, so beloved by sporting writers. "Heads up, sterns down," and all the rest of it. "Scoring to cry;" I never quite knew what it meant. "A sheet would have covered them." Splendid people, and the stuff worth more than they ever got for it. However, we were talking about scent. "Visibility good" was a frequent report from our airmen in the late War, and if you get that on a hunting morning, it will mean "scent good." It foretells rain.

Tons of poetry has been written about fox-hunting. I believe Somerville's "Chase" to have been a great poem in the olden days, but I must confess I never read it. I came across these two verses the other day, by Will H. Ogilvie.

Silence wraps the leafless trees,
Not a brushwood branch is stirred;
Sleeping lies the morning breeze,
Hidden is the listless bird.

Then—a patter in the lane;
Then—a shoe that clicks on stone;
Creak of saddle; chink of chain;
Music of a bit-bar thrown.

Through the latticed boughs the sun
Sets a glittering shaft astir,
Lights the lean hounds one by one,
Takes the bit and gilds the spur.

Right, there gleams a magpie wing;
Left, there shrieks a watchful jay—
These have heard the deep rides ring,
Many a woodland day.

Good that, I think. He has seen it. A man cannot write stuff like that from hearsay only. Masfield is impossible to quote. Take "Reynard the Fox" home with you, and let me know what you think of it.

Egerton Warburton is interesting to us, as Cheshire men. "*Quæsitum Meritis*." "Farmer Dobbin" and "Farewell to Tarporley" are as good as any. The Introduction gives an account of the Tarporley Hunt, and concludes with the words: "I trust I have not drawn too gloomy a picture of the future of Foxhunting. My best wishes are for its lasting prosperity and, whatever be the obstacles against which it may have to struggle, my earnest hope is that the youth of many generations to come may continue to find as much enjoyment as their forefathers have done in the noble sport." And so say all of us!

Whyte-Melville gives us "The Galloping Squire," "The Clipper that stands in the stall at the top," "The Good, Grey Mare," "The

place where the old horse died," "Brow, Bay and Tray," and last, but not least, though not with a hunting subject, "A Cavalier's Song" from "Holmby House,"

For the sabre shall swing
And the headpieces ring,
When the gallants of England strike
home for the King!

Makes you look up your armour and think of stirrup-cups. You could not get into your armour now, Major, but you are still able to do the other thing, so let's drink "Fox-hunting."

DECEMBER.

PHEASANT SHOOTING.

A lot of nonsense has been talked about Pheasant Shooting, so you think I might as well add my quota. I must own I know very little about it, as it does not happen to have come my way to any extent. Last Saturday, as ever was, we saw as many foxes as pheasants, three of each. Our chief object was to get a shot, a last shot probably, at partridge, but, although we saw plenty of birds, they were unapproachable and not a cartridge was fired.

I have never formed one of a party of "sportsmen" who are always reported in the papers to have been "early astir" on the 1st October. The shooting of immature birds or animals has no attraction for me. The date for pheasants and duck might both be put forward a month with

advantage, though I have seen young pheasants shot by mistake on the 1st September. Hang it all, Major, don't rub it in. I stood you a bottle of vintage port (my only ewe lamb) next time you came to dinner and thought that would cloud your memory of such misdeeds. Do *you* remember shooting those six young turkeys stringing down the turnip drill when you shot at, and missed, a low-flying partridge? That cost you untold gold, and was not a mere matter of being "sconced." Do you remember poor old "Clare" shooting the guinea fowl the last time he was ever out in the Forest? There were about half-a-dozen of these birds reared with the pheasants and they flew quite high. What fun he used to make of the shooting over the Trafford Park estate which he had before it was built over. "We go out for partridge and we can't find them. When we find them, we can't hit them, and when we do hit them, they're pheasants."

About a shoot, in which he had a share, in the Forest he was asked, "What is the screage?" He replied, "I'll be hanged if I know." "How many guns are there?" "I haven't the faintest idea." "How many days do you shoot?" "Not a notion." "What is the average bag?" "My dear sir, don't ask silly questions." The point of the story is that all his answers were perfectly true.

That particular shoot was certainly the most sporting one for pheasants that I ever had the pleasure of taking part in. Imagine 2,000 acres of continuous woodland, mostly oaks about as high as a house. The undergrowth was almost entirely bracken, which was shoulder-high in places, and, until snow

came, never really went down, except where foxes or badgers trampled it. In pre-War days, a few hundred birds were reared, and natural food being abundant and water everywhere, these soon scattered. There *was* some sport in putting the birds over the guns, and also no lack of volunteers to walk with the beaters. Even the cocks lay in the thick cover, and many a chance was got of a bird going back. The guns who were at the stands got a fair amount of shooting, and the quantity was made up for by the quality. The rides were not always available for a clear shot, and most of them were only the width of a cart track. You had to keep your eyes skinned even to see birds coming, and many went over unscathed.

Lunch was a great institution. Every man, if I remember right, brought his own, even the guests. There was great rivalry in cheese and apples, and some wonderful liqueurs were discussed. Champagne was produced once by a guest, but audibly voted bad form, though none of it went home! Enough food was brought to feed the five thousand, and the beaters had the time of their lives.

Why does food taste so good in the open? Why don't we have all our meals, regardless of weather, as we do out shooting, out of doors? Ask your wife, and she will soon tell you. "You would eat too much, and with food at its present price, etc., etc.—Ridiculous nonsense to talk about food coming down, etc., etc." Well, I know she is right, and whether Protection will make any difference—oh! hang politics. Pass that twelve-and-sixpenny stuff, Major, after helping yourself. After lunch and a cigar—Try one of

these, Doctor, I know you like a cigar—Like them! Good heavens, where did they steal them from? Some of these town-dwellers do know something, and the best of everything is good enough for them. I once took out some "Trichi" cheroots and gave one to a member of the party. The story is still green, as the cheroot was. He gave it, half-smoked, to a beater, who soon threw it away and lay down in the bracken. Then an unfortunate dog had a go at it. Poor animal! The vet. could make nothing of the case. He did not call me in to a consultation, or I could have told him something about acute nicotine poisoning.

After lunch, the whole party would be ordered to walk the "mosses" on the chance of a woodcock, which usually obliged, but was not always added to the bag. What with the effects of lunch and the bad going, it was odds on the bird. A couple of drives to wind up with, and a walk back to the farm, where the bag was laid out. Twenty-five cocks, eighteen hens, one woodcock, four rabbits and three woodpigeon would be a typical bag for a good day, not a monstrous bag, but each bird had the story of its undoing almost written on a label round its neck.

A change of boots into slippers and a delightful cup of tea and buttered toast at the farm, where our host, who managed the shooting, was at his best. Old times—his forbears had been on the farm since the earliest Georges—old friends, woodcock fighting, farming, hunting, badgers and foxes, partridges, parish councils and the thousand and one things that make up life in the country, came under review and discussion.

Would that we could meet oftener in the country to have a talk, but early hours and distance forbid the pleasure, which is enhanced by its rarity. The people in the towns must get tired of each other from their frequent meetings. Not so in the country. We have a month's happenings to discuss, and something must happen in that time, even in Bœotia. Someone's cat has had kittens

Talking about farming, it is questionable whether pheasants do more harm than good to crops. Lloyd George said they ate mangolds, and got well laughed at by those who preserve pheasants, but they will peck at these roots, and are specially fond of potatoes, though they prefer the latter boiled. Wheat, of course, they will feed on, but wireworm is a dish they specially enjoy on the menu. Acorns and beechmast form a large part of the food of wild birds. The hand-reared sort have to be hand-fed all the year round, or they would starve, if in great numbers. Pheasants are not able to "fend" for themselves like partridge. Their exotic strain tells against them.

Shooting the hedgerows and rough ground for pheasants is all right for those who like that sort of thing. You want two guns, or better, three, and a good spaniel. One gun on each side of the fence and the third at the end, as a stop. But the shooting is poor stuff and, although you can easily shoot under a bird that gets up quickly, there is not as much satisfaction as in killing a driven bird.

Indeed, if game exists in any quantity, driving should be resorted to in the case of nearly every species. There is no better way of shooting rabbits than stopping them out and shooting them across rides, specially cut for

the purpose. Snipe can be driven backwards and forwards, if their haunts are known. Partridge driving gives the best shooting in the world, better even than grouse. But, of course, you cannot drive one covey with much chance of success, and you cannot put, say, ten pheasants over three guns out of a small wood. They will "diddle" you in most cases. *Experto crede!* However, while we may advise driving, there should be a limit to the number of birds shewn. The owner of a big pheasant shoot may argue that it does not cost much more to raise 10,000 birds than it does 1,000. The argument has a commercial element, which is attractive or repellant, as you like to see it. He tells you he gets ten times as many birds killed and ten times as much shooting, and the cost is, for the sake of argument, only twice as much. But he cannot say that he gets ten times more sport. He probably does not shoot more days or entertain more friends, as each man uses two or even three guns on such big occasions. Battues have earned an unenviable notoriety for this kind of proceeding.

Personally, I would take the 1,000 bird shoot for pleasurable sport. Six guns and six hundred birds over them. Allow eight drives and seventy birds would come each drive. Allowing that sixty at most could be shot at, each gun would get ten shots at each drive and, if a man is not satisfied with that, let him go home and shoot his tame pigeons or his hens and ducks. I know which day you would take, Major. The big day would give you and me a gun headache and very little else. Unless the team is a picked lot, a large number of birds in the big day are pricked or badly wounded, and the recollection of such things is painful.

There are a few rules to be observed in covert shooting. Leave the low birds severely alone. Don't shoot ground game that is running between the guns and the covert. There is great danger to the beaters of a ricochet. If you cannot see your right or left-hand neighbours, never take a chance in their direction. But although it is just as well to know something about the game, we shall not play it very often. The whole thing is too expensive. The shooting of game, except in some natural game counties in England, such as Herefordshire, costs about a pound a head, so it is a good thing, as the man in the story remarked, that we don't shoot many.

I don't know the knack of shooting driven game. By practice it becomes almost automatic, though I expect the best shots have their off days. The one thing necessary is to swing well forward after getting on to the object, though some will tell you another and better way.

There is always a good deal of "stringing" of the shot, and unless you are well in front, a great portion of the charge has no chance at all. Missing them in front is better than hitting them behind. The pace of birds in full flight is interesting, but difficult to time exactly. Golden plover and teal are said to be quicker than most, but when either partridge or pheasant get going, they would beat most express trains.

I think it was Stuart-Wortley who held forward "the length of a street" at a small flock of teal coming down wind, and killed the last bird with his first barrel, hitting the sky with his second!

Well, good-night, Major. By the way, Diggory told me of a cock pheasant he saw last Tuesday. Come to-morrow, and we will see what we shall see, but I will bet you half-a-crown he will "best" us. The snipe may be in. It's a bit early for them, but you never know your luck. Good-night, mind the steps.



THE OLD DOG-FOX.



TELLS STORY TO HIS VIXEN



I.

They d——d near got me to-day, old girl,
you warned me they'd draw the gorse.
I winded old Dan as I lay by the gate to
pick up a rabbit or hare.

For your supper and mine—for you're
not very grand and "expect"—about
March, so you said.

But when I got back to our "little grey
home" the door was fast barred with a
stone,

So all on my lonesome I quietly supped—
I knew what the game was to be—

And I said to myself, "Now, my son, you
keep fit for the dance that you'll lead
'em to-day."

II.

Now I always have told all our cubs that
the sound, faraway, of a slow-trotting
horse

Is uncommon enough in these motor-car
days to suggest that you'd better
beware.

So I just had a peep at the view—when
things happen, it's best to keep cool
in your head.

Old Tom Leach he was there, I've seen
him before, and I thought it was time
to be gone,

For it's fifty to one there's a hunt in the
air, and it may be the object is me,
And the grandstand at Burton was fairly
well filled to see a good fox go away.

III

I felt fit to run for a kingdom, and foolishly waited to "view" them. Of course,

I ought to have "mizzled" but wanted to see what I could of the "fun of the fair."

I saw Wright and the whips coming down the old lane with the pack, and "his coat it were red"

Then the field followed on, and a brave show they made and many a fair "Lady Done."

But I thought it was time to be off, so I slipped out of covert where no one could see—

At least, so I thought, but I made a mistake, for I heard a loud shout—"Gone away."

IV.

My point was the main earth at Peckforton Rocks, but the wind was ahead in full force.

So I struck out for Waverton, hoping to put another fox out from his lair

To take on the job. But I found none abroad—They were all of 'em snugly in bed.

So I quickly ran out at the Waverton end, and made for the village alone.

I slipped through the gardens and swam the canal and then felt as brisk as a bee. And I gave them a steeplechase ride to the Rocks, though I own it was some of it clay.

V.

I just called at Handley, and then, on the high ground, I looked round and ventured to pause.

The whips had been sent on to stop hounds from crossing the railway (the huntsman's grey mare

Was glad of the check, for the pace had been great) for the signals shewed "danger ahead."

There were huntsman and whips, three pinks and two blacks, and a girl on an upstanding roan.

But the train was in sight and no longer I dared a spectator just merely to be. I knew I was right for my point, and some more, but we'd all had enough for one day

VI.

The main earths were closed! but I knew of a hole you once used as a final resource.

You remember it?—Yes—We'll go there next June, when the babies are out of your care.

They daren't dig or wouldn't, for give them their due, they don't count their sport by the "head,"

And the Cheshire will "bust" you, yet give you fair play, if you give them good sport, I must own.

But I'm tired, very tired, it's a long way to come after hunting, so what's it to be?

A hen which you got when old Dan moved the stop—We've had a grand hunting day.

[This is not a song, or even a chantey. It is merely a ghastly experiment. The first lines of each verse rhyme, more or less, and the second lines also try to keep up the illusion, and the others do their best. The allusion to "Lady Done" is a well-known Cheshire saying about a good-looking woman or girl.]

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